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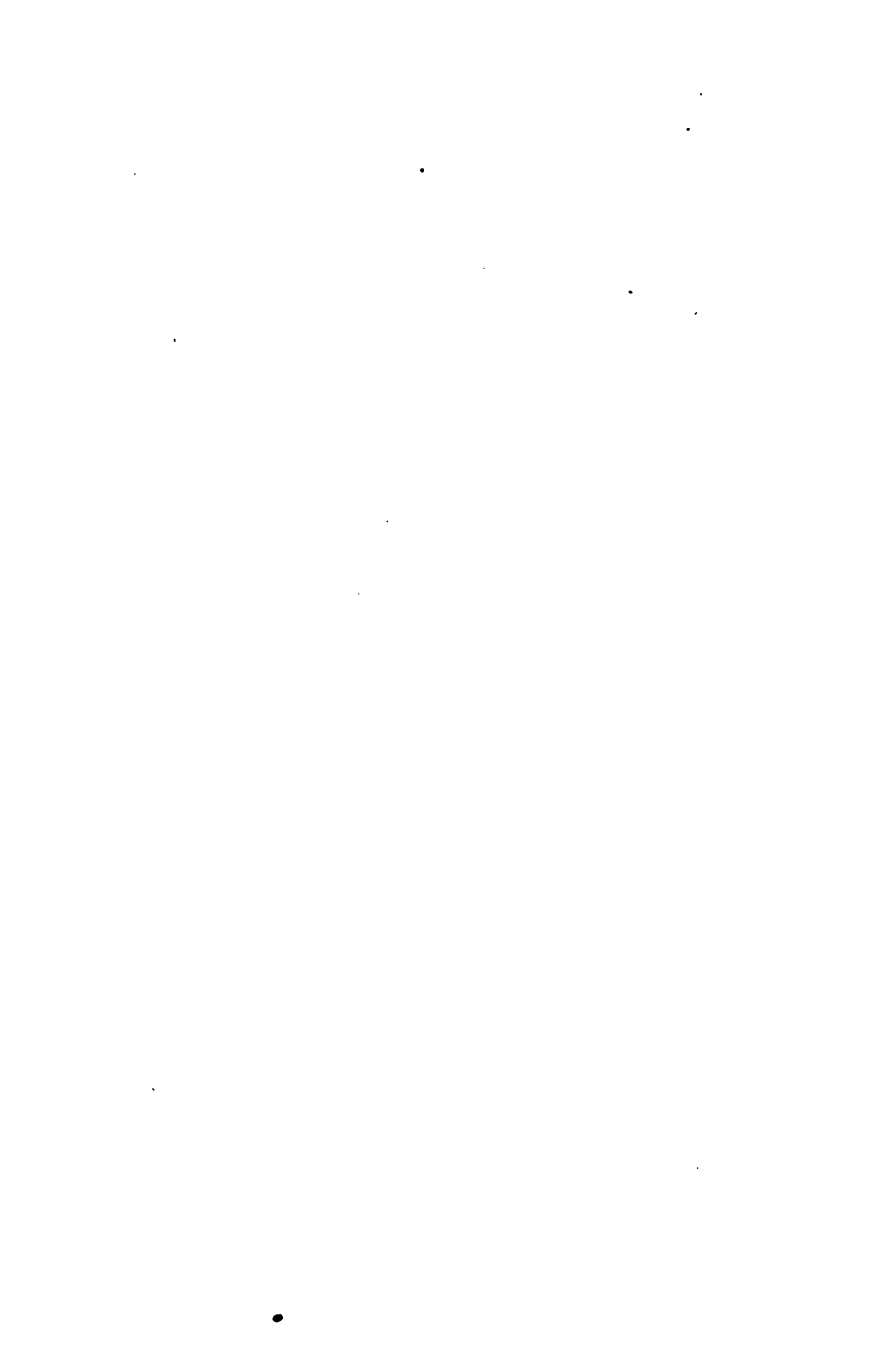
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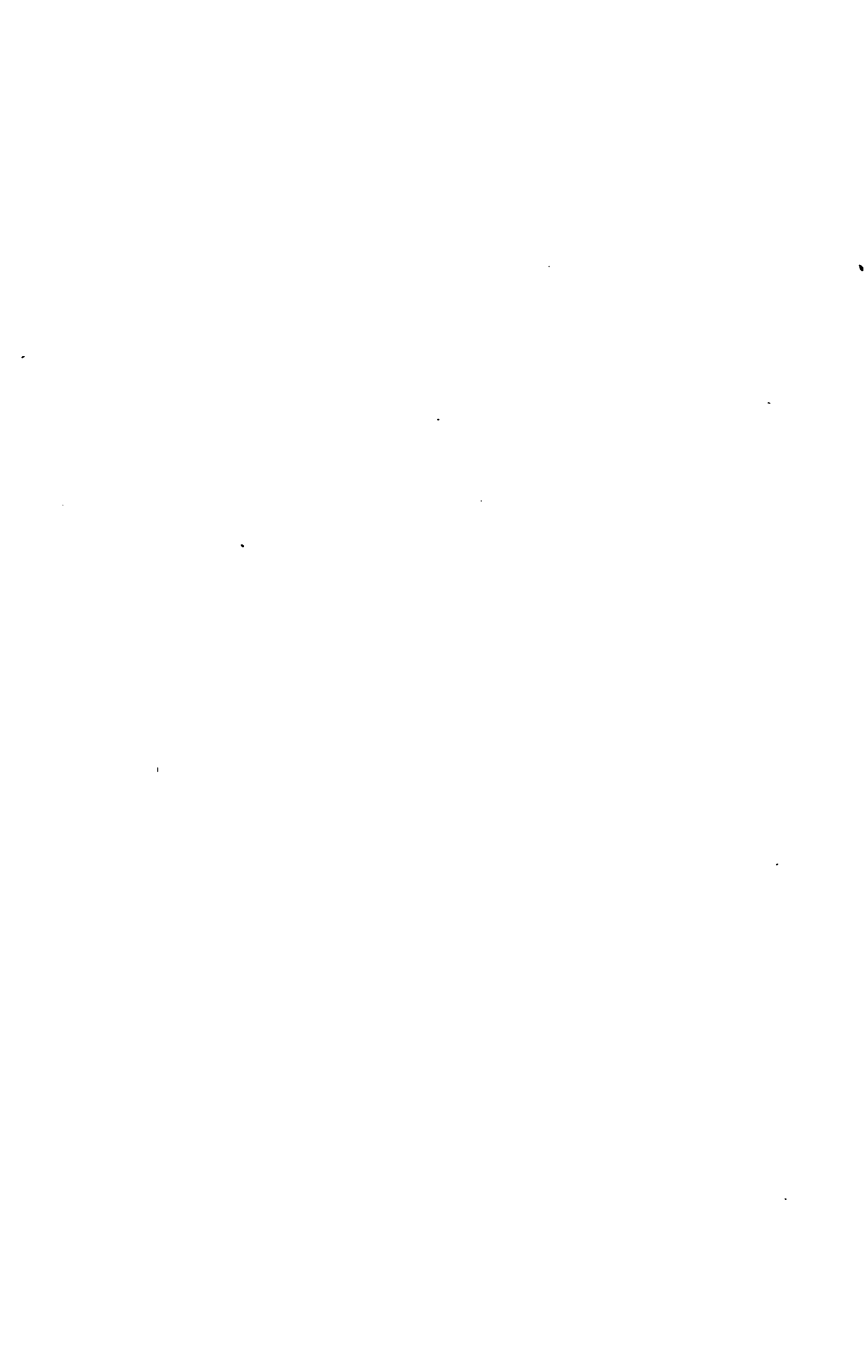
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LOVE : THE REWARD.

A Novel.

BY

PHILIP MAY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

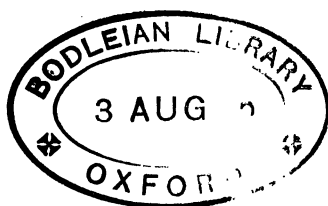
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LOVE : THE REWARD.

CHAPTER I.

THE PHYSICIAN OF THE POOR.



MAXIM TSIEPHERKIN was a Petersburger ; and the bright skies, the wide plains, and the beautiful undulating forests of the Sunny South, were to him unknown. It was his allotted part in life to be the companion of those who were forced to labour in stifling workshops, garrets, or cellars ; so he learned to look upon the world from a Russian artisan's point of view ;

and he sought to bestow upon this class all the necessities of life, for which they toil, too often in vain.

No man, he said, should add to his riches, except by labour ; and every increase of capital in the hands of the labourer tends to put better, cheaper, and a greater variety of products, within the reach of the working-man.

But Maxim Tsiepherkin did not himself toil for gold. He found the world evil, and the poor in their dens were suffering from asthma, consumption, and fevers ; so he laboured to help those who were afflicted with sickness or disease, and the love of the people was all he hoped for as his reward.

He was a republican ; and opposed to monopolists and government by a class. He believed in the Government of the People in the interests of the People ; and he desired Russia, which has plenty of land, and enough men willing to cultivate it, to say to the idlers, "Go !"

The young Liberals who represented the

higher classes, and who sought to bring about government by a class, accused him and his fellow-workers of striving to found an ideal state, in which all men would abstain from every kind of useful work. The accusation was false; for Maxim desired the equal division of labour amongst all capable citizens; and he only wished for the cessation of that work which is wasted in pandering to the depraved tastes of those now living in idleness, and setting an evil example to the people whom they consider their inferiors: the People who are morally, and who would be, with half their educational advantages, intellectually their superiors.

Maxim Tsiepherkin was not a blood-thirsty man; and education was the weapon which he so much desired to place in the hands of the people, armed with which, they were to effect a revolution. He considered the State bound to provide schools and libraries for the rising generation; so that the schools might lay a foundation for the education of the young citizen, which he could

employ in the public libraries as the means of a wider self-cultivation.

Money and labour, he thought, could not be better expended than in providing institutions to afford a mental and a physical education for every citizen, and shelter and medical aid for those unable to work, in consequence of the ills to which every mortal is heir.

A kinder hearted man than Maxim Tsiepherkin was not to be found in the whole Russian empire; into the vilest dens he went to work for suffering humanity, which could pay him no fee; and he gave his services to the Nihilists' hospital, though he would break no crust there at the expense of those who so kindly subscribed the necessary funds.

He had no great faith in the articles of religion; but he did believe in the example of Him who went about the world labouring for the poor and unfortunate, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and associating with those whom the rich despised. It might be that all this was only a

tale handed down by an unenlightened nation ; but the story remained, truth or fiction, beautiful exceedingly.

Maxim Tsiepherkin himself rejoiced to think of it as true, and it filled his heart with sympathy, and with pity, near akin to love, for all mankind.

The example he did strive to follow, and he put it before doctrine and all else. His skill was at the service of all, and he asked for no reward. He would break bread with the poor, if they had any ; and if they had none, and Maxim possessed a few copecks, he shared his loaf with them.

Such was his life.

Alexandroff's hospitality he had not hesitated to accept ; and Ivan had often supplied him with food and medicine for his patients, most in need. But now that Ivan was in prison, Maxim was reduced to extreme want. He was unable to possess a coin and refuse it to a fellow-man in greater want than himself ; and he was very loath to ask for payment for his services, even from those who were able to pay.

Had it not been for Sophy Peroffskaya, in all probability he would have lacked the food necessary to sustain him as a machine capable of doing good work. Such necessities he considered it the duty of the State to provide; but he had no hesitation in eating at the house of Sophy Peroffskaya, where the food was provided at the expense of the artisans and peasants whom he attended in sickness.

Maxim Tsiepherkin missed Ivan Alexandroff, with whom he had been accustomed to spend many an evening; and he was conscious of a feeling of loneliness, which his love of mankind was not powerful enough to overcome. So when he had no patients to require his attention, he spent his time with little Zillah, who had always many inquiries to make of him concerning Ivan Ivanovitch.

Zillah wished to know when they were likely to try Ivan, or to set him free; and though Maxim Tsiepherkin could give her no information, the little maiden found a pleasure in talking of Alex-

androff to one who had more sympathy for him than that shown by the other Nihilists.

Notwithstanding the great difference between Maxim Tsiepherkin and Ivan Alexandroff personally, and between their modes of living and thinking, they had always remained good friends. Ivan had certainly neither entrusted his secrets to his friend's keeping, nor had he considered the physician of the poor quite his equal ; but Maxim had demanded no equality for himself. His ambitions had been all for the advantage of the poor, and Ivan had occasionally given him money to obtain the medicines and food required by his patients.

Ivan Ivanovitch had spoken with rapture to Maxim Tsiepherkin of his budding love for the Smolna maid ; but when Vera Michailovna came to live with Sophy Peroffskaya, he did not explain to Maxim why he did not marry her at once. Finally, Maxim had asked him to marry the maiden for her sake ; and then he had urged that she did not love him, as he would expect his.

future wife to love ; and she had deigned, he said, to accept the homage of such a man as Prince Potemkin.

Maxim was not quite blind to all his friend's faults, and he suspected that Ivan had learned to care for little Zillah, just as he had at first for Vera Michailovna ; but of this neither spoke.

Then, when at the last moment Alexandroff offered his heart and hand to Vera, Maxim Tsiepherkin and all the Nihilists were surprised ; and even had it been explained to them, they would have been incapable of understanding how writing an novel with his first love as a heroine could have induced him to return to his allegiance.

The Nihilists, when in love, were not accustomed to burrow in the ground like rabbits, and they wondered at the conduct of others, who seemed desirous of proving that love and sanity were incompatible qualities.

They had other opinions and other customs, than those of the world which they deemed so evil. They thought that the nations of the earth

should be united by bonds of love, and they considered it their duty even to destroy a despot who had men taught, and ordered them, to rend, maim, and slay their fellow-creatures. Maxim Tsiepherkin was the one who above all others preached this doctrine of the unity of nations through love ; but he was unwilling even to raise his hand against Cæsar, and he advised the soldiers and others, when commanded to execute the cruel orders of a blood-thirsty despot, to stay their hands, and to offer a passive resistance, even at the cost of their own lives.

Sophy Peroffskaya hardly agreed with him, and many of the Nihilists entertained quite another opinion, considering it better to exterminate one family than to allow the members of that family to destroy thousands upon thousands of the working classes of Russia, and of other countries.

Little Zillah, his disciple, was perhaps the only one who shared all his opinions ; and he did his best to protect her from evil and to make her

life a happy one. She gave all the money which she gained by singing at concerts and at the cathedral to the common fund; but she often pressed Maxim to accept a part of her earnings. She would urge that it was not right for him to go about on his errands of mercy wearing a shabby coat, whilst she, who could do but little good in the world, wore at her concerts the prettiest costumes which St. Petersburg could afford; but Maxim would not accept her offers. He mentioned that the Great Preacher, when working for humanity, had taken no heed of his raiment.

One evening, when she had been engaged some time at the Great Theatre, the manager requested her not to have her shabby attendant admitted to the waiting-room, which was frequented by young nobles and other friends of the actors and actresses.

Little Zillah was much hurt, and she urged Maxim to accept a suit of clothes from her as a present; but he preferred to stand outside the

theatre, waiting with the coachmen round the wood fire which was provided upon their account. He considered this an excellent plan ; for he could talk to these men, instead of wasting his time inside the theatre.

The bright little maiden, however, went to a tailor out of employment, and gave him the money to make Maxim a suit of clothes. This man found it no difficult task to borrow an old coat from the physician, which was returned with a new suit.

Even after this, Maxim would not be persuaded to waste his time amongst the young noblemen in the waiting-room, though he was very particular to go, or to send some one, every evening to fetch her. There were so many idle young nobles in St. Petersburg, who, having no occupation, could think of no better plan for passing their time than striving to dishonour the few pure women upon the Russian stage. Managers encouraged these men, who were the *noble* patrons of the opera and drama ; and more-

over, an actress, who was the subject of a passing scandal, would often prove quite an attraction to the public.

For those who fell, and for those who had fallen, there were shouts of applause, bouquets of flowers, gold, diamonds, and other precious stones; and many an actress was to be tempted by such gifts as these. The noblemen who devoted their lives to such objects as this were certainly not very clever or witty; but they spoke as if they had a right to speak, as if they were the fountain of honour, not of dishonour.

The little maiden, whom Maxim Tsiepherkin saw safely home from the theatre every evening, little knew how much pain she caused him by always talking of Ivan Ivanovitch. "If he is sent to Siberia," she would say, "God only knows when he will return."

The physician of the poor found it very difficult to pray that Ivan Ivanovitch might be safely delivered from prison; but he did carefully repeat this prayer, and in his hesitation to pray for his

more fortunate rival, he recognised how utterly vile human nature was.

Maxim's love for his companion was ever increasing, and he lavished many a thought, trying to find a way by which he might please her. Of his love he did not dare to speak, lest she might refuse to allow him to be her companion of an evening, and by returning alone from the theatre, run the risk of being a victim to some nobleman, who would consider any foul deed fair, in love or war. So Maxim never spoke of his love, and she never thought of finding any love in Maxim Tsiepherkin.

Love indeed is blind.

Rather than as a lover she thought of him as a sour old philosopher, sent into the world to teach men and women, unwilling to learn, the difference between good and evil.

"I trust," she said, one night, returning from the theatre, "that all the policemen who arrested Ivan Ivanovitch, will be hanged one of these days."

"There is an excellent precept of the Bud-

dhists," he answered, "which every Christian should practise. It is very simple; but it teaches the Christian how to fulfil one of the most arduous of his duties. 'Every man'—it says—'should every night wish well in his heart to all mankind. If his conscience can indicate any individual whom he cannot regard with benevolence, he must then resolve to perform some act of kindness for that person; for when you have been of service to a man, it is easy to wish him well.'"

Little Zillah agreed with Maxim Tsiepherkin in all he said; she knew him to be a great and a good man; but he had not the Grecian profile of Ivan Ivanovitch, he had not the little pleasing ways which Ivan possessed; and he was in every way a man to esteem, not one to love.

She would have been much pained if anything had happened to Maxim Tsiepherkin, and would have been willing to make any sacrifice for him; but she did not entertain those sentiments of love and reverence for him which she felt for Ivan Ivanovitch.

Her little heart was almost breaking for Ivan shut up in the gloomy prison of St. Peter and St. Paul. She would have done anything to liberate him ; she would have risked her life willingly, and have laid it down gladly, for his sake.

Alexandroff, however, was far away from her, and Maxim Tsiepherkin was better than no one as a friend and adviser. She had persuaded him to allow her to employ some of her spare time in nursing, and to spend some of her income in alleviating the misfortunes of those upon whom she waited. The Nihilists had frequently pressed her to employ a part of her earnings in some way which would seem best to her ; but until she began to nurse Maxim's patients, she had given them almost all she received.

Zillah quite agreed with Maxim Tsiepherkin that it is the ideal of human morality, that each should labour according to his powers, and take according to his needs. She was willing to imitate him in giving her services to the poor, and like Maxim, she had no extravagant desires to satisfy.

She learned from him to entertain a wondrous pity for poor suffering humanity ; but she did not require much teaching, for Ivan Ivanovitch, she thought, might be one of those doomed to suffer in this life. So with Maxim she went willingly to care for, and to distribute their funds amongst the outcasts of St. Petersburg, who slept upon the staircases of wretched habitations, where the doors were always open, or did not exist, and in cellars that were damp and creeping with vermin.

Maxim Tsiepherkin was a silent man, and at times he would become almost hopeless at seeing so much misery upon all sides ; but to little Zillah, his disciple, he would pour out his heart.

"There is an advantage," he said to her one day, "in Russia being behind the civilization of the West, which is only a refined and barbarous egotism after all. Here a change must take place, and that speedily and then Russia must overtake and outrun the West in the race of civilization. She must strike a blow and destroy the despotism of monarchs, aristocrats, and capitalists, which

the minor revolutions of the West have never been able to blot out; and only when this has been done can the People rule for the benefit of the People."

Zillah listened to his words, but she could not share his enthusiasm; for her thoughts were with Ivan Ivanovitch, who was in the prison of St. Peter and St. Paul.

She knew what terrible outrages had been perpetrated on prisoners during the reign of Nicholas; that when the gates of the prison were closed, only the walls had ears; and that there were still the mines of Nertchinsk for those who had but too much reason for complaint.

The little maiden was very miserable, grieving bitterly for the woes which he was suffering. He did not love her; still she did not ask for his love, since that was Vera Michailovna's. But she did ask that he should live outside the prison walls, and that he should have his freedom, even if he should employ it to separate her from him for ever.

In some minds, sorrows melt as does the ice in the spring; but there are other natures which cause sorrow, like the late-autumn snow, to harden, after it falls.

Neither to Maxim Tsiepherkin nor to any lesser man could the little maid pour out the troubles of her heart; they were her secret; and, though they cost her pain, precious.

But when alone at night, she could revel in the luxury of tears; then her grief might flow forth from her soul, and she might utter her cry of lamentation.

"O moon and stars," she pleaded, "you who look down upon us all, upon the just and upon the unjust, you who know the secrets of all our hearts, whether they be good or evil; bear my love to Ivan Ivanovitch, for I am pure, and only the pure know how to love!

"Oh! if it may be so, let his love fall upon me, all unworthy though I am; let him love me, for love ebbs and flows at my heart, and if he love me not, then I must die. Bid the birds of song

bear to him the burthen of my love, and beg him hearken unto their dulcet tones, telling of friendship, tenderness, and love in unison ! ”







CHAPTER II.

LOVE'S WEARY PILGRIMS.

ALLEXANDROFF, in prison, was informed that an Imperial Commission had been appointed to try him and his companions, instead of one of the ordinary tribunals. The jury system had been introduced after the Polish rebellion ; but when a verdict of guilty was required by the Government or Czar, they did not adopt the Western plan of selecting a jury, biassed by religion or politics against the prisoners, but boldly nominated Commissioners to condemn. Still Ivan wished to know the worst ; for anxiety, and the alternate hope and despair, were depriving him of the little bodily strength which the prison fare could otherwise have sustained.

Some hope, he still entertained; and he thought of Verotchka as of some bright star, to which he should still direct his course, because she alone could dissipate the gloom which had enveloped him like a cloud. Little did he think that she, even for his own sake, would prove unfaithful. He thought rather of a romantic marriage, celebrated within the prison, the officials being bribed to consent; of a loving wife who was to accompany him to Siberia, when his sentence had been read, and who was to be with him in a life that was half-dead, a living death.

What happened was very different. The *Gólos* of the day subsequent to Alexandroff's arrest, announced that a marriage had been arranged between Vera Michailovna, daughter of His Excellence the Privy Councillor Lertoffski, and His High Origin the Prince Potemkin.

The Czar approved of the marriage. He knew that Lertoffski's daughter had been amongst the Nihilists, and that she had returned to her father and society. This was a good sign, and

he determined to allow her nuptials to be celebrated within the Imperial chapel; and as a still greater honour he and the Imperial family would grace the ceremony with their presence.

The day came; and sad and lone was the heart of Vera Michaïlovna, though the roof and walls of the chapel, and the habiliments of the priests and of their attendants, glittered with gold. Even the presence of the Emperor and of the Empress did not make her contented with her captivity; for when the Court entered the chapel, she knew that there was no hope remaining.

A brilliant sun illuminated the chapel; and the gilded ceiling, reflecting the rays of the sun, formed a species of halo around the head of Vera Michaïlovna. The superstitious whispered to one another, that it was a sign of ill omen; and Vera, broken-hearted, wished to die.

The diamonds and other precious gems of the ladies shone forth with a magic splendour in the midst of the treasures on the walls of the

sanctuary, where Imperial magnificence seemed to challenge the majesty of the God whom it deigned to honour, without forgetting the dignity which can alone belong to the great Autocrat of all the Russias.

The marriage rites were long and imposing. In the Eastern Church, everything is symbolical, and in this chapel the pageants of religion are able to add lustre, even to the splendour of the Court.

But during the mass, when the time came for the bride and bridegroom to drink together from the same goblet, Vera could scarcely touch it with her lips, so great was her loathing of this man who was to be her husband ; and when she had to walk three times round the altar, holding the prince's hand, to signify the conjugal union and the fidelity which should attend their march through life, she hung her head, looked down upon the ground, and was unable to face the congregation.

When the two doves were let loose in the

chapel before the benediction, one flew to Vera Michaïlovna, whilst the other settled on a gilded cornice over her head. Doves, in Russia, are the sacred symbol of the Holy Ghost ; and in the Imperial chapel they are well trained to fly together to the gilded cornice, there to go on billing and cooing, whilst the mass proceeds. They rarely fail to perform their part in the ceremony to the satisfaction of every one ; but when this does happen, the superstitious are wont to become prophets of evil.

Vera had been taught by the priests and nuns, during her childhood passed at the Smolna Convent, to pay a reverential awe to the ancient traditions and superstitions of the Greek Church ; and she had never afterwards been able to banish from her mind the impressions which her teachers had stamped upon it.

Superstition alone would have been unable to overcome her, but she also hated the bridegroom, upon whose face there was a smile of triumph, not of love ; and she was thinking of Alexandroff

in the prison of St. Peter and St. Paul, who was no longer her Ivan.

Her courage gave way, and she fainted; and when they restored her to consciousness and proceeded with the marriage ceremony, she wept. It was all a foreboding of ill, the fashionable ladies whispered to one another; and no good could come of a marriage, against which the omens had so plainly declared.

Vera thought that the dove which had flown to her, was sent to warn her of the sin which she was committing; for she knew well enough that it was wrong to do evil, even for love.

She was more keenly conscious of her wickedness, because she wished to escape in death all the evils and trials of existence. She now feared the judgment which might be delivered against her in another world, much more than that which her own sex might pass upon her in this.

Love had purified her, and had chastened her spirit; and she had undertaken to suffer shame, dishonour, and disgrace, to save Ivan Ivanovitch

from the torture which a tyrant could inflict upon him. But directly she had fulfilled her task, she wished to die.

Ivan would live and be free, and she would have been a martyr for his sake.

She pleaded to Death, for though she feared his embrace, some day or other he would come unto her; and she did not hate him as she did the man by her side.

She longed even to be mad that she might escape from him; but she knew not how to play the madwoman.

The old days passed within the convent walls came back to her memory, and she would have been content to do penance for her sin all her life long, if they would have allowed her to return.

She did not even ask to see Ivan Ivanovitch now; she only prayed that Ivan might have wings to fly from his captivity, and that she might be free from the demon who had tempted her to sin for Ivan's sake.

The burden of her sorrow and suffering was

too grievous to be borne by one so frail and fragile as the convent maid, and it was unnecessary for her to feign madness, for before the service was quite concluded she became hysterical, and there was no one there who could comfort her.

Ivan Ivanovitch had been in prison awaiting the day upon which he would hear his doom proclaimed. He expected no mercy, and he would plead for none, but on his way to Siberia he would make one attempt to escape. If he should succeed, all would be well, and Vera Michaïlovna would come to share with him a happy exile ; and if he should fail, the muskets of the Cossack guard, or their lances, would put an end to his miserable existence.

One morning a warder told him that he would have to go before the commission, and a couple of soldiers escorted him across the courtyard to the hall in which the commissioners were sitting to try the political prisoners who had been arrested during the two preceding years. The soldiers

remained at the door, and he entered the hall with a policeman at each side.

After a few moments he looked round and observed that he was in a spacious room which was rather dark. Then he noticed the four men sitting at a table strewn with papers, and his heart failed him, for he recognized the president, and it was Prince Potemkin.

He had known all along how little chance of escape there is for a prisoner without influential friends, who is tried by an imperial commission, but he had trusted to chance, knowing how vain his trust was, and a little to the efficacy of the prayers which he had offered up in captivity.

The prince, however, would settle his fate in a few minutes, and he would be condemned to Siberia for life; perhaps, even to the mines.

He had prepared a statement during the hour he had been allowed to prepare himself for trial and condemnation; he had determined to urge that he had attended the meeting of the Nihilists with no evil intent, and that his novel was a

romance, not a political writing. But when he saw Prince Potemkin he knew that this would avail him nothing.

Prince Potemkin asked him his name.

"Ivan Ivanovitch Alexandroff."

"When did you become a Nihilist?"

"What is a Nihilist?"

"You are sharp, my fine fellow," said the prince, "but we have had men like you to deal with before."

The prince, the other members of the commission, and the secretary laughed; and Alexandroff felt a little disconcerted.

"When did you become a Nihilist?" the president repeated.

"I do not know what constitutes a Nihilist?"

"A Nihilist is . . ." began the president.

"A Nihilist is . . ." began the vice-president, when the president had ceased. The other members of the commission acquiesced by nodding their heads.

"A Nihilist is . . . What is a Nihilist,

Mr. Secretary?" The president was not quite content with his own definition.

"A Nihilist," answered the secretary, "is a man who by word or deed opposes the wishes of the Czar, or of those in the service of the Czar."

"Are you a Nihilist now, fellow?"

"I am a nobleman and a barrister of the New Courts."

Alexandroff knew that a nobleman was seldom condemned to the quicksilver mines; and when he had said this, he was glad to observe that the commissioners listened to him more attentively, while the president asked him questions, likely to be of service to him.

"Do you consider that the emancipated serfs ought to possess their lands?" one of the commissioners asked, when he had made a favourable impression.

"Yes," he answered, at which there was a murmur of disapproval.

"I am a Liberal," the president observed, "and I believe in the enfranchisement of the

serfs. The Czar, moreover, has set them free, and has ordered that they shall possess lands under certain conditions. Am I not right, Mr. Secretary?"

"Your Excellency is quite right. His Gracious Majesty has deigned to emancipate the serfs and to grant them lands under certain conditions stated in volumes not now before your Excellency."

There was a consultation between the commissioners; and then Alexandroff was reconducted to the gaol.

The commissioners had decided that, if they obtained no further evidence against the prisoner, he would be dismissed that day week; and the press was allowed to publish this decision, as well as the sentences passed upon the other prisoners.

A week later, when Vera's marriage had taken place, he was set free. He was very thin and pale; his black hair was streaked with grey; and his beard was long and matted. Seeing himself in a glass for the first time since his arrest, he was

surprised to observe how much he had changed.

He hastened to the house of Sophy Peroffskaya; but when he learned that Vera was married, he was wrath, and swore that he wished he had never been indebted to her for his freedom. He wished she might have been struck dumb in pleading for him to such a husband. He had always thought of her, and he had described her in his book, as one pure and innocent; and now she had sold herself for rank and gold.

He hated Vera Michailovna; for she was false, and the world was evil, and there was nothing good or true. It would be well, he said, to destroy; for everything in the world was vile.

It was a long time since he had tasted decent food; but he did not desire to eat. Food, he said, would have choked him, for he could feel Vera's falsehood sticking in his throat.

Maxim Tsiepherkin found him feverish and ill, and proposed to accompany him in a carriage to his rooms. Alexandroff did not care what became of himself; nothing, he declared, was of any

importance, for Vera Michailovna was false.

The excitement of the trial, and the shock which he had sustained on hearing of Vera's marriage, were too great for his powers of endurance, weakened as he was by being so ill-fed for so many weeks; and when he reached his rooms, he was delirious.

Maxim Tsiepherkin watched by his side that evening, and sent another to fetch little Zillah from the theatre to Alexandroff's rooms, that she might be Ivan's nurse.

The little maiden came, deeming it an honour to be allowed to wait on him, upon whom she had lavished her unrequited love; and she was eager to nurse him tenderly and carefully, as a mother would watch over a sickly first-born.

Oh! how she loved him, though he loved Vera, who was false.

She hated Vera Michailovna for her falsehood.

There could be no forgiveness for her rival who had caused him this pain; for a woman can never

pardon a woman who robs her hero of one tittle of his glory.

She had submitted in all things to Vera Michailovna, graced by Ivan's love, and had allowed the convent maid to scold her, not for any fault of her own, but because Vera was discontented with the world, which she found so evil.

But now this Vera Michailovna was false; and she had forsaken Ivan Ivanovitch for a man well-known to be a villain, to describe whom Zillah could find no words vile enough.

The love of the little maiden was pure, sincere, immeasurable, and innocent like that of a child. Zillah had no thought of winning the love of Ivan Ivanovitch by stratagem or artifice; she did not desire to pique his vanity, to lead him on toward the altar rails by raising alternate hopes and doubts, or to invite comparison between herself and her false rival; for these are the frauds of the women standing in the market-place, not the tokens of simple love.

She never, even for a moment, thought herself worthy of his love ; but she had longed to read his romance ; yet even this small honour had been refused her. Still the unknown was full of mystery, delight, and enchantment ; and she could fancy his work superior to any which had ever been published to the world.

Her love did not cause her to forget that she was his nurse ; she cared for him with loving tenderness, and she pitied him because he had been wronged by a woman.

Some of his hair had turned grey, and his beard was matted and long ; but to her, he was not less handsome now than he had always been. She washed his face, brushed back his hair, and combed out his beard gently, fearing lest she should awaken him to pain.

She watched him carefully, she changed the cold bandages at his head every now and then, and she felt his pulse and took his temperature as Maxim Tsiepherkin had taught her. Then his hand was tossing about outside the clothes, very

hot and feverish ; and she raised it to her lips.

Her heart was full of love and pity for him, and it seemed as if her lips had drawn some of the fire from his hand, for her cheeks were burning.

"It was no harm," she said aloud, being alone with him unconscious, "I love you, my darling."

"Oh!" she continued, "what I did bear from Vera Michailovna, whom you loved, and who yet was false. How I honoured her because you deigned to love her! And I loved you, and love you still, and will never love another ; though you never think of love and of me together.

"I am thine, though you make light of me, and care not whether I live or die. I am yours. Do with me as you will ; send me away, and I will go whither you bid me, even if it be to the grave."

She was, indeed, feverish, and she did not know what she said.

"I love you, that is all, I love you ; it is only little Zillah, it does not matter ; Vera is not here."

She had been listening to his delirious cries

for hours ; she had been with other delirious patients before, but never alone with one like Ivan, whom she loved, and who spoke in his ravings of her rival who had won his love, and had deserted him.

After a time, Maxim Tsiepherkin entered the sick-room, quietly as was his wont, and he must have overheard some words that little Zillah had spoken, for he said to her, in a stern voice for him :—

“ Zillah, there is a precept for nurses which you would do well to remember. ‘ Keep the feet warm and the head cool.’ But you seem to desire to fire the brain with all the kindling powers of the imagination, and as to the patient’s lower extremities, you seem to have forgotten all about them.”

Zillah wept. It had never been her intention to neglect the care of him in any way ; he was so precious in her sight that it seemed to her impossible that she could neglect him ; for she loved him so.

Maxim Tsiepherkin, seeing her weep, gave some little attention to the nurse, and he found that she also was feverish. So he dismissed her from her charge; but though he did it kindly, thinking that she required rest, this dismissal seemed to her a punishment for her carelessness.

Zillah could not forget her charge that night and she could not sleep. She knew that Maxim Tsiepherkin had fetched Hussy to nurse Ivan in her stead, but Hussy might fall to sleep. Hussy might omit to give him his medicine at the right times; and there seemed to her so many dangers that Ivan ran, of which only a nurse with love and skill like hers could steer him clear.

So she rose several times in the night and went to the sickroom, disturbing Hussy and doing no good, though she did love him, and though in general she was a skilful nurse. She was feverish herself, and it seemed to her that some sympathy between the sick man and herself led her thither.

It was all a morbid irritation of the nerves, which, if not carefully soothed, would result in an

hysterical fit, Maxim Tsiepherkin would have told her ; but Maxim was in his bed sleeping soundly.

Zillah considered the medical man hard of heart, because, when his friend was ill, he could leave him in the hands of a nurse. She could not do this ; she longed, weak and tired though she was, to be with Ivan Ivanovitch to anticipate his every wish, to bring him back by her own efforts to health and strength ; but Maxim slept.

She thought that he lacked sympathy for his patient thus to leave him ; and all the little attentions which he had paid her, and many an act of kindness done, were forgotten in the vexation of her heart. He spent his days, it is true, in working for the poor of the world ; but the world was evil, whilst Ivan Ivanovitch was good and noble, and him had Maxim Tsiepherkin forsaken.

He was the physician of the poor, and he held his talents in trust for all those whom his fellow-doctors left uncared for ; but with her, had

she remembered this, it would still have been no defence.

Still he could have done nothing more for Ivan Ivanovitch ; and he was a man who treated his body as a machine which was to be so used as to be capable of the largest amount of work. When he left his patients, he freed his mind of their aches and pains, and allowed his body and brain to rest that he might be ready to diagnose the next case to which he should be summoned.

For days little Zillah was very cold to him ; she could not forgive him for his neglect. She lavished all her woman's love and tenderness upon Ivan, who could love her not. He had played with her once, he had taken a great interest in, and had studied the little maiden ; but at last all the love of his heart had gone out to Vera Michailovna, and neither separation nor her falsehood could set his heart free.

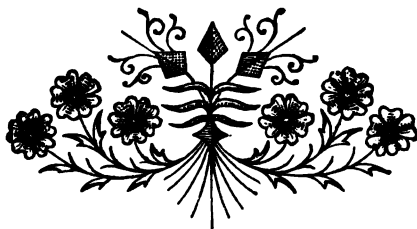
Zillah was his nurse, and she had not learned, like the women of society, to conceal her love

under the veil of indifference; he noticed her attachment for him, and one day he spoke to her words of reproof. He told her that he belonged to Vera Michailovna, that he could never be another's; and he almost broke her heart by blaming her, and saying that in bestowing her affection upon one who could never return it, she showed her lack of a maiden's modesty.

Bitter were the tears she shed, and she told Maxim Tsiepherkin that she could not stay; and another nurse was obtained in her stead, for Hussy had been advised to leave before, lest the police should come and find her.

Before Zillah went away, Maxim learned the reason; but he did not blame her. He pitied and loved her; and he was grieved because her love could never be his. He spoke words of encouragement to her; he robbed Ivan's words of their bitterness, by telling her that she had a right to love, and that a pure maiden's love could bring no disgrace.

The world would have condemned her as Ivan did condemn, but Maxim Tsiepherkin had other ideas than those of the world : and he loved her.







CHAPTER III.

THE SHADOW RISES, AND THE SHADOW FALLS.

THE marriage of Prince Potemkin was considered by the society of St. Petersburg a most fortunate event for all persons concerned. The leaders of fashion desired to enter the Potemkin Palace; and they were the more eager to obtain admittance, because gossiping and scandalous tongues had rumoured that within those walls every law, human and divine, had been set at nought. Society expected Vera to become a leader of fashion, and to find delight in decking her person with dainty gowns and jewels of price; whilst the prince was not only to gain a charming wife, but he was also to rid himself of the phantom of a

pernicious past; for in consequence of his dissipation and licentiousness, which he had made no attempt to conceal from the eyes of the world, he had a very bad reputation. The Court and fashionable world of the capital are by no means morally exacting; and a man may lead a very evil life indeed without incurring their censure, if he will only abstain from drawing the attention of respectable people to his orgies; but the prince refused to pay any regard to the feigned modesty of society.

Princes are allowed a wide licence; but there are some actions, even of theirs, which must be cloaked. The favourites of the Czar are above this and all other rules; still Prince Potemkin had no right to expect special protection from Alexander II., because he had pandered to all the vices of Nicholas. During the reign of the latter monarch, he had become indifferent to public opinion; and he had ever since considered himself above censure.

No one in the fashionable world believed the

tale, which was still remembered in St. Petersburg, of his having murdered the girl whose body had been sold to the dissecting room by the police ; but Maxim Tsiepherkin had not ceased to suspect him, and the Nihilist press had not allowed the suspicions to be forgotten. Since the emancipation of the serfs, princes have been unable to commit murder with impunity in Russia ; and the knout has also been abolished.

Marriage had done much to rehabilitate the character of Prince Potemkin ; the Czar and Court had been present at the wedding, and the prince had been raised to the rank of general. Still he had not really won the beautiful woman, whom he had led to the altar, knowing that she hated him ; for he could neither reduce her to submission by brutality, nor by any means make her a loving and obedient wife.

Vera Michailovna had been taken ill on the day of her wedding ; and she had then made up her mind that she would never get better. This was the only way, she thought, in which she could

escape from the wretch whom she had taken as her husband. Youth, however, will overcome disease, and she had recovered.

Then she found a cause of complaint against the prince. Whilst she had been ill, he had been leading a riotous life in another part of his palace ; and many agreed with her that these orgies should not have been held, whilst she was ill. For a long time, she refused to see him ; she had recovered from her serious illness, the doctor said, but she was still suffering from hysteria.

The first time she saw her husband, after they had parted at the marriage feast, from which she had been led away by her attendants, she taught him that amongst the Nihilists she had learned how to defend herself.

The prince had come to offer her his caresses, which she hated ; and she had shown him that she would have none of them.

He had been carousing with some choice companions ; the wine had rendered him maudlin ; he pressed his caresses upon her ; and she struck him.

He swore at her. She had struck him once before, he said, with impunity, but then she was not his wife ; now he had her in his power, and would humiliate her. He thought of striking her, but he contented himself with shaking her.

She was soon free from his drunken grasp, and she then drew a dagger. This sobered him, and he soon left her.

All alone she was overcome with terror. She would never have had the courage to use the weapon ; but fortunately he had taken to flight at the sight of it.

She had another hysterical fit, and the doctor found her, terrified by the violence of her noble lord, holding a dagger in her hand. She told him what had happened in an incoherent way ; she complained of the orgies which were held in the palace ; and she declared that she would petition the Emperor for a divorce.

On the morrow, she was just as resolute ; she was determined to petition the Czar to free her from her brutal husband. Every one talked of

the illness of the princess, and of the prince's brutality; and many people said that these were the consequences of the ill omens.

Some went further than this. It was well known that at some of the suppers which the prince had given since his marriage, he had not only laughed at omens, but he had even eaten pigeons and doves, the signs of the Holy Ghost.

He would certainly come to a bad end.

Every one pitied the beautiful wife. Marriages for love are rare in Russia, whilst those arranged by the parents are of frequent occurrence, so no one thought of blaming the privy councillor, who had naturally expected that marriage would cause Prince Potemkin to reform his manner of living; but every one blamed the prince, who, having married one of the prettiest women in St. Petersburg, still continued to lead a life so immoral that the Nihilist press, clamouring for the abolition of the aristocracy, could cite him as one of the Russian nobility for the loss of whom the nation need not be called upon to grieve.

Lertoffski called upon his son-in-law, and delivered a lecture to the prince upon the duties of a husband to a wife who happened to be the daughter of a person lately elevated by the Czar to the dignity of a privy councillor ; but the prince was neither docile nor willing to listen to reason.

Afterwards the privy councillor paid a visit to his daughter, and when she assured him that a reconciliation was out of the question, he did not blame her. She was married now, and capable of deciding for herself ; so he contented himself with the hope of obtaining a separation upon advantageous terms.

It was arranged that there should be no open rupture ; that one-half of the palace should be at the disposal of the princess, and that he should never enter it ; that the wings in which he held his orgies should be shut off from the rest of the building, and that his riotous guests should come and go without disturbing her ; and, further, that he should make her a large allowance during his life, to be increased at his death.

Prince Potemkin naturally objected to all these conditions. First, however, he yielded to the last; it did not matter what became of his money after he was dead; as to the other propositions of his father-in-law, he had a great deal to say, and he said it, too, in a loud voice.

Lertoffski, on the other hand, had also much to say, and he spoke with all the dignity of a virtuous parent. He had never insisted upon his parental duties so firmly before. He hinted at the unpleasantness caused by the Imperial indignation at the evil conduct of a subject; of the discomforts of a country life to one who enjoys the pleasures of town; and of the chills of Siberia, and the hardships to be undergone on the journey; but the prince objected to have his income diminished during his lifetime.

"The little dove," Lertoffski said, "cannot live on air. Fine birds require fine feathers, you know. If you had been content with a dancing girl, without doubt she would have been willing to cut her cloth shorter."

"Women," the prince declared, "are all devils ; and generals' daughters are worse than the rest."

"That," retorted the general, "accounts for your being so anxious to marry one. Birds of a feather, you know."

"I wish the women were all hanged!" exclaimed the prince. "Some say that money is the root of all evil, but I declare it is not so ; women are at the bottom of everything."

"I have no objection," answered the general ; "let women be the soil and money the root. Women and money, you know, somehow they manage to get together."

The prince began to smile as if the wit were all upon his side. He was very glad to be able to turn the conversation from the question of settlements. He lighted a cigar ; and the general also began to smoke.

For some time there was silence.

"What ugly rumours float about Petersburg, now-a-days!" the privy councillor observed after

a long pause, during which each had smoked away, and had enjoyed his own thoughts.

"In my young days," the privy councillor continued after another long pause, "no one was allowed to speak under the rank of colonel; otherwise there was an end to them, socially speaking."

"How about those above the rank of colonel?" the prince asked.

"Little fish may splash about a great deal, though bigger fish do eat them," Lertoffski answered.

"Well, there was a time when a fish, which had swallowed a gudgeon, only ran the risk of getting the harpoon, if he thought he had eaten a whole whale. Now, when a private is shot, people make such an outcry that one would think there is the end of the Russian army, generals, colonels, drummer-boys and all; and when a young girl dies, they calculate how many descendants she might possibly have had a thousand years hence, if her seed had not died with her."

"We call ourselves Liberals and friends of humanity now, you know; and 'if you call yourself a mushroom you must go into the basket.'"

"So you are of that kind, are you?" began the prince rather angrily. He considered that the acts of princes should not be questioned; but seeing Lertoffski's scowling face, and his glance towards the papers on the table, he continued hastily—

"But what about the rumours?"

"Well, I was thinking about that girl, you know, who was taken from her parents, drugged, and finally left in a public square to die. But you know the tale."

"All this comes of the emancipation of the serfs. Twenty years ago, who would have thought of that?"

"Ah! but they were serfs then," Lertoffski answered.

"Well, what if they were? Are they any better off now? The majority are not, you know. A little enjoyment, and then death—what does it matter

to them? A short life and a merry one. . . ."

"Yes," Lertoffski answered, "but that does not hit the sparrow. This is rather a quick death than a merry life. I was speaking to the police about the matter. . . ."

"Michael Petrovitch, it is a depressing affair altogether," the prince interrupted.

"It is, but the Emperor was good enough to take an interest in the girl's welfare."

The prince, quivering with fear, tried to laugh; but he was only able to raise a sardonic smile, which gave his face a scornful and ferocious appearance.

"After her death, I mean. He was pleased to instruct the police. They say, you know, they are on the track; and probably a pardon and a reward might induce some one to come forward, and then. . . ."

"Have done with it," shouted the prince in an excited tone, "your talk is enough to give one *delirium tremens*." In fact, the prince was already shaking a great deal.

"Well, have done with it, if you like, but I think I shall propose this . . ."

"Oh! don't have anything to do with the matter."

"I see you wish to take the wind out of my sails," the general answered, with a smile on his face.

"Oh! no, I assure you, I do not. Remember this: if a man strikes out with a sword in the dark, he may hit some great man, and then his relations are sure to avenge his fall. The wiser course is to leave things to themselves and Providence. What will come, will come!"

As the prince said this, he stuttered a good deal; he gasped for breath; and his face was pale as death. It occurred to the general that men who indulge to excess sometimes take their leave of the world without any ceremonious leave-taking; and the privy councillor feared that the prince might say farewell, before he had arranged the little matter of post-obits.

"You had better sign this now," he said aloud;

he was even willing to make some small sacrifice to get it signed at once, so he looked all the more fierce and determined upon that account, that the prince might not ask for too great a reduction.

“Very well, if you insist upon it,” was all the prince answered; and it cost the general much trouble, diplomatist though he was, to conceal the smile that seemed determined to steal across his face. He did finally manage to keep the rascal down; and then he rose, walked to the bell, and said to the prince:—

“I will summon the witnesses.”

“Are any necessary?” the prince asked, in the tone of a martyr whose last hope was gone.

When the document was duly signed, the prince recovered himself a little. He had taken a little brandy from the sideboard, and had managed to sign his name with a shaking hand; but his legs were by no means steady, and he had not at all the appearance of a man who had just done a generous action.

“Mind you don’t go and bring ruin upon yourself and your family, of which I am a member now, you know,” he observed, trying to smile.

“That is quite true,” the privy councillor answered. Then he paused for a moment before continuing:—“Now, don’t you think you had better give me the papers concerning the girl you entrusted to the care of Henriette? I am the only person living who knows the truth about the matter; and of course you could never so sully your princely rank as to acknowledge her, now that she is an actress.”

“Had I not better destroy them?” the prince asked; he was no longer able to think for himself, and he was glad to have some one to give him advice, whose interest was identical with his in this matter.

“I think you had better give them to me. Of course there is nothing to prevent you leaving her a trifle by your will, and acknowledging her as an illegitimate child; but an actress . . .” The privy councillor assumed a look, as if it were

contaminating even to think of a creature of that profession.

“I think it would be wiser to destroy them ; but I will do as you wish, for your honour is now my honour. But as to wills, the least said, the soonest mended, and I have no intention of dying for many a long day.”

Going down the stairs of the Potemkin Palace, with the papers concerning Zillah’s birth in his hands, Lertoffski muttered to himself:—“ You had better take care. When a man rolls about too much in the road, he may fall in a ditch.”

“ Money makes a good salve ; but no ointment can cure a fracture.”

Agony and pain melted in time from Vera’s heart, as the snow thaws in the roads in the spring ; but there abode with her sorrow and sadness, as slush and mud tarry on the highways, when the thaw sets in.

She longed for some change to come to her life ; she cared not exactly what. If he would come unto her, then he could accomplish all for

which her heart was longing. Still she had made her sacrifice for him, and neither could she summon him to comfort her, suffering protracted agonies, nor could he come back to her without robbing her of all that was left to her of goodness and of purity of heart.

She had eagerly desired to petition for a divorce from her tyrant ; but without her father's assistance, she knew that she could not succeed ; and her father considered the settlement the prince had made better than any divorce.

The general wore golden spectacles, and through them he looked at everything.

Nevertheless, he was a man generally esteemed ; and every one knows what the newspapers say of such a privy councillor, when his time comes. "The late-lamented has terminated his existence to the unspeakable regret of all his superiors and inferiors ; and the world weeps for him. He was the intimate friend of humanity at large, a respected citizen, a beloved husband, a father

amongst a million, a charitable man, most liberal with funds under his control, one to be followed to the grave, not only by all his intimate friends, but also by all the widows and orphans whom he never robbed. He is not dead: he has only gone to enjoy his reward."

Vera was very well aware of all this, but it did not comfort her; she was not even very anxious to deserve half a paragraph for herself; for she had heard from Vassili Alexandrovitch that celebrated murderers in England often get two or three columns. In Russia the longest obituary notices generally fall to the lot of *thieves* of "High Origin" or of "High Nobility."

Vera found the world a miserable place, and it seemed to her that the little joy that remained belonged to the makers of war and to the impure of heart.

She was discontented with her life.

What would it matter, she asked herself, in the long lorn future? What would it matter, the means by which she should obtain for herself the

cup of joy and gladness, such mean measure of delight, as life still might yield ?

Honour, truth, and unselfishness, these were words, mere human words, doomed like men to fleet away and to leave no trace of their glory.

Delight and a dream of love could be stamped upon the human mind and bear their impress upon the outward form ; that was something, though the mind and form were alike vile.

All will die, all will die, she repeated to herself ; but the vivid dream of the heart's outpouring will be ever present, whilst brief life is running its short span ; and it will almost seem to whisper of a life that can have no end, of a spirit that can never be entirely lost, even when it shall vanish into the shadow of the passing light of day.

She had loved him, and this love of hers seemed to her more beautiful than all the other dreams that she had dreamed in her short life. It was her maiden love, her only love, and it ennobled her ; she had loved him, and she could not be vile.

It might be that this love of hers had been only an illusion of illusions, a mockery of dream-land, mere words, vain words. Love itself might be only a dream, for life was a passing thing, and for all, even for the delights that could fill the heart with vibrations of love, there would be one end; for all things there would be the same last flickering up and the dying out of life, and then—and then——

Her love would cleave to her in the spirit, for her love was pure.

Even to dissipate her sorrows and misery she could not be vile.

She would not summon him, for she would not tempt him to sin.

The end of all is death; and in death, misery, from the pure heart, will pass away.

“Will pass away! yes, but when?”

To the young, Death seems afar off.

Patience! Patience!

Death is at hand.

All is dead, and we are dead.”

The shadow rises, and the shadow falls, and the day is spent; it behoves each to make a good and a speedy use of his talents, for the sun goes down apace.

Melancholy thoughts were ever present to her mind; and it seemed to her that there was hope only in death.

She thought of the seclusion of a convent. There she might bury herself in life, far away from temptation; and there she would be nearer to death, and could hold true communion with her God.

One day, when her mind was full of such thoughts as these, Sophy Peroffskaya and Maxim Tsiepherkin came to see her. She greeted them with a friendly cry, for they were part of the old life.

"What is the matter with you?" Maxim asked. "Are you ill?"

"No," she answered, "it is nothing. It will soon pass away." She spoke quietly; there was a tranquil sadness in the expression of her face.

Maxim looked at her earnestly.

"It is nothing that you can cure. It will soon pass away," she repeated.

"We shall all of us soon pass away," Maxim said, speaking slowly and sadly.

They were all silent. It was as if a good angel had flown noiselessly past. They all thought of the future.

The pause was a long one.

Maxim Tsiepherkin was the first to speak. "We shall leave the world, I fear," he said, "little better than we found it."

"Little better," echoed Vera. She was thinking whether some did not make it worse.

"Little better," re-echoed Sophy. She was thinking that the world was scarcely capable of improvement.

"We should all strive to do something," Maxim said.

"What is there to be done?" Vera and Sophy asked. They had both lost heart.

"Education, education, education! We must all strive to teach the young generation to know

the true from the vile; they must have before them the map of the paths which we have trodden; and they must understand that it is the duty of each to work, to do a day's labour, and to bid a last farewell."

"What work shall we all do?" Vera asked in a low, sad voice.

"To till the soil, to sow the seed, that seems the noblest task. Some may be incapable of good work, and some must endure an enforced idleness; but none may impede the work. The seed should be scattered, even though it fall by the wayside, among bushes, and on the stones; for some may take root, and grow. Men must be taught to love one another; and human nature must be made less vile, by each striving to improve himself or herself: one kindly action done, it is a seed sown."

Maxim Tsiepherkin spoke quickly, as he always did, when he was excited. His enthusiasm often served to awaken that of others; and it did so upon this occasion.

When he had spoken, they all became thoughtful; and there was another long pause.

Vera broke the silence by proposing to Sophy that she should go and see her apartments; it was a poor excuse for a Nihilist to make, but they all understood it. Vera had never learned, even during her long stay with the Nihilists, that it is better to tell the truth than to make any excuse at all. Vera, however, had been trained under the old system; and lies are only white ones, when employed by polite society.

Sophy and Vera left the room together; and when they were alone, Sophy looked at Vera, and wept with her; for this typical, self-sacrificing Nihilist woman had not so hardened her heart as to be incapable of recognising the little tragedies of life.

"Can you have cared for him so much?" Sophy asked. "I thought you were cold in all things, and that the world might go its way and leave you behind, careless as to its fate." She said this and paused. Then taking Vera's hand

in womanly sympathy, she continued :—" You will forgive me, Vera, child."

" There is nothing to forgive, Sophy."

" Yes, there was, Verotchka," she said, feeling a warmer link of sympathy for her companion. If Vera could suffer herself, she would know something of the pains and miseries that fall to the lot of the outcasts of society, whom the world hunts down as criminals ; though the world has taught them nothing but crime, though they must take what they would have, if they will not be content with all that the world allows them—to suffer, to starve mentally and bodily, and to die.

" With regard to myself, Sophy, it is all nothing."

" Nothing! Still your eyelashes were wet with tears. There are dark circles under your eyes. Your face, too, looks pinched and thin, and you are paler than ever ; is it all nothing ?"

" It is all nothing ; yes. It will soon pass away."

" And the sorrow at the heart, Verotchka, will that pass ?"

“Yes, and the heart, too. Life is short ; there is nothing to be done.”

“Is it possible that you can have loved him so much ? You seemed so high and proud, so far above us. Sometimes you even made me jealous of you. Your lips seemed to say :—

“‘I have done nothing that the world deems wrong. Many of the things that the world deems wrong are wrong. You do not mind offending the world which is a vile world ; and though you may do good in the end, you are not particular as to the means. I, however, am pure. I have done no man wrong.’”

“Oh ! no, no, I never condemned you like that,” Vera exclaimed, throwing herself into Sophy’s arms, “I never condemned you like that. I knew the vileness of the world in which you were doing your best to bring about some change. The world uses force to maintain the powers of the few rich, which cause the sufferings of the poor. It is like a little war ; the poor must strike a blow if they wish to be free. I did not condemn

you, Sophy,"—Vera had forgotten that in the past she had condemned—"I only condemned myself because I could not work with you, because I was not worthy to remain with you. I was only a weak woman. I was weak—was I not?—to marry the prince."

"We are all weak sometimes, Verotchka," Sophy answered. There was just a little tone of superiority in the voice, but though so slight, it stopped Vera's confidence. She had intended to tell Sophy all; now she would not. It was her own secret this; she would share it with no woman. In a future life, perhaps, Ivan would learn why she had made this sacrifice.

There was only one more act of self-denial for her to make; she felt that she should part with Ivan's *Russian Romance*. She had read the MS. so often that she had the words almost by heart; but still, even the paper upon which it was written, was dear to her.

On those pages he had poured out his heart to her; and she was very loath to return his

words to him. She had stored their spirit up in her heart ; but she valued the words which he had written, and the paper upon which he had recorded his thoughts. Still it was her duty, she thought, to return the work to the Nihilists for whilst she retained it, there was always a possibility that the prince might obtain possession of it, and wreak his vengeance upon Ivan Ivanovitch to spite her ; and she thought, too, that his work, like that of Tchernychevski, would have an important influence on the Russian people.

She considered the MS. one that might convince thousands ; but she forgot that the more successful it had been in convincing her of his love, the less likely it was to succeed in instilling a broader love in the hearts of humanity. That medley of fiery passion and gentle tenderness, which he had lavished upon her, his heroine, was her own little love, all apart from the sympathy of the world ; and it could never be divided or spread as a cloak over the weak and suffering.

“ I . . . I want . . . ” she began ;

she hid her face on Sophy's breast, she was trying to conceal her emotion, and it could not be concealed. "I want to work. Then I might forget."

"There are some things that we cannot forget." Sophy's superiority was altogether laid aside; and it seemed to Verotchka that Sophy also had something which she was desirous of burying, some hidden sorrow, some love that in this life could never revive.

Their hands met. There was a hearty clasp; then they turned away from one another. They were weeping; but Sophy was the first to recover.

"Ah! Vera," she said, "your burden is heavy to bear, I know that. But believe me, Verotchka, no one finds the burden on one's own shoulders easy to carry. There are some indeed who have no joys and no woes, but their lives are like walks without an object: they go straight on, it does not matter, no one cares, it is all nothing."

"But there are joys without woes," Vera said.

"No, Verotchka, there you are wrong. Every

joy has its train of woes. Those who revel in the highest delights suffer the deepest sorrows. Such is the world! Such is life!"

"Can one not forget?" Vera asked.

"Forget! it is no easy task. Men try to drown care in drink, but care has as many lives as thirteen cats. For a time it is possible to forget our sorrows, if we devote our time to work for some object that is dear to us; in this way we may keep care from us for a time."

"Is there nothing I could do, Sophy? My life is ended here; there are no hopes that I can even indulge, for all is dead within me. It seems to me that I ought to grow cold."

"Maxim Tsiepherkin thinks that you might find a useful task, if you would use your wealth to console and assist the victims of tyranny and despotism, and to aid the propagation of socialistic ideas amongst men and women of education and talent. Your drawing-room might be open to scholars and artists, doctors and statesmen, literary men, and those who preach the gospel

of humanity. Black-coated revolutionists might then become the fashion, and the hearts of some might really be touched by the doctrines preached, and by the sufferings that they could see for themselves outside. You might thus do good in your own sphere."

"And I am not fit to work in the one that you have adopted? It is so, is it not?" When the heart within is sad, it requires so little to make us feel.

"Russia requires others, besides ploughmen. Some must sow, and some must reap. There are farmers and bakers, mechanics and teachers, all these are wanted; and you, Vera Michaïlovna, may be a teacher."

Soon after, Sophy and Maxim Tsiepherkin took their leave. Vera had asked after little Zillah; she thought very kindly of the little bird of song now, for all jealousy was past; that, like the rest, was dead.

All life was misery. She had made her sacrifice, and it was to be borne to the end. Even his

words were sent back to him, and it might seem to him an insult. But no, not that! There was a barrier to love, and it seemed to her that there was also a barrier to hate. The germ of life is minute enough, the time would come when he and she should die, and then . . . and then.

. . .

She fell upon her knees, and she began to pray.





CHAPTER IV.

A JOY FOR EVER.

IN St. Petersburg, there were two revolutionary parties desiring a complete change in the form of government. The first consisted of the young nobles who had obtained their liberal ideas from the West, and they considered that the nobles and the capitalists should assist the Czar in making the laws of Russia; whilst to the second, all those working men belonged who had been convinced that it was neither divinely ordained that the few should revel in luxurious extravagance, nor that the many should toil all their lives to sustain a miserable existence.

Amongst the rich and noble, there were many

who, beholding the misery and wretchedness of the masses around them, were willing to sacrifice their spare time for the benefit of humanity ; and there were a few—but only a few, alas!—who were willing to give more than their time for the social and moral amelioration of suffering humanity, so worthy of pity.

The young generation was moved to action, either by ambition or compassion ; the young Liberals were seeking a career by which self might be glorified ; but the so-called Nihilists were generally earnest men, desiring to make the passage of life brighter to themselves and their fellow-passengers, than if passed in selfish and luxurious idleness.

The young egoistical nobles, who adopted the cause of the many for the purpose of self-glorification, began by writing liberal works, to which the censor refused the stamp of his approval ; then they went into a voluntary exile, which they generally passed at Paris, where they could laugh, dance, flirt, feast, and even publish their works to

the enlightened minds of the West, which would only receive them with indifference.

Then, tired of their liberal ideas, growling at the soil upon which they had sown, not at their barren seed, they would be content to enjoy the luxury of the Court at St. Petersburg, or the hospitality of kindred souls at Moscow. The old Russian capital was the place of residence which these *Liberals* usually selected; for there they could adopt, as a political creed, the cause of the Slavs, which was not fraught with too much danger, even for men who wished to enjoy all the pleasure and luxuries of life.

The educational advantages, afforded by the Government and by enthusiastic young nobles in the early reform-days, had a very different effect upon the people. The spread of education, in spite of the Czar and his officials, and the propagation of revolutionary ideas, were working like strong ferments, to cause the poor to rise against the rich.

The working-men of the town were the first to

throw off the yoke of ignorance, and to long to free themselves from the tyranny of the Autocrat and of the capitalists; then, members of the rural communes who came to the industrial centres to find work during the winter, carried the new ideas back with them to their brethren in the country.

A few young nobles associated with these working-men; but the nobles desired to prepare an elaborate scheme for the future government of Russia; whilst the artisan and peasant cared little for formulas.

"The most important fact," Maxim Tsiepherkin would say, "is that two and two are four. Far too many of us waste our time in considering what would happen, if two and two were five."

The Nihilists, too, adopted a new religion; for all who were not atheists listened to Maxim Tsiepherkin preaching the gospel of the *Saviour of the poor*.

The people learned that their spiritual, as well as their temporal guides, had misled them in the past; and that the penances, prayers, and alms,

wrung from them, had only served to retain them in the power of the priests, whilst the holy wars against the Turks, in which their blood was spilled, were waged for the glory and ambitious purposes of others, and to hold them the faster in their bondage.

The working-classes had a hatred of dilettantism, in labour, science, or politics, and they only agreed with the young liberal nobles in this: that the present generation was not called upon to gather the fruits of the past, but were to judge and immolate it, for the sake of the future.

Vera Michailovna's *salon* was almost the only one at which the liberal-minded politicians assembled to discuss the questions of the day in the interests of the people; and the princess was much beloved for her beneficence, which she practised methodically, and for the permanent benefit of those in need, not for the sake of show. She had opened the doors of her hospitable mansion to men of promising ability, as well as to those of recognized talents; and the young men

of the rising generation flocked to her entertainments, which were the most pleasant of all those given in St. Petersburg. To be admitted to her drawing-room, was a sign of merit; and musicians, authors, and artists, were at home there, knowing that they were received upon account of their achievements, not upon account of their names.

Princes and statesmen were not received upon account of their rank, as elsewhere; for the princess would not lend her countenance to any one who had neither done, nor promised to do, something for the people.

Those "High Origins" and "High Nobilities," rejected by the princess, were received with favour in the prince's part of the Potemkin Palace, where the doors were open day and night to those nobles vile enough to be present at orgies which were a disgrace to St. Petersburg.

Even the inhabitants of the Neva capital prefer virtue to vice; and it became a popular saying there:—

“A woman must marry a bad prince in order fully to appreciate merit and virtue.”

Alexandroff, when he heard of the parties given by the princess, anxiously awaited an invitation to visit her ; but the days went by, and he received none. She had taken no notice of him, though she received Zillah, Maxim Tsiepherkin, and many other men and women whom he considered his inferiors ; she had forgotten him, he thought ; and he was gloomy and desponding.

He had received the romance from Sophy Peroffskaya's hands ; but with it Vera had sent no note, and not even a message ; and she had not marked a single passage with a sign of her approval.

Zillah, one of the famous singers of the day, now, was received at the Potemkin Palace ; but she was received, perhaps, he thought, upon account of her notoriety, and he, because he had made no name for himself, was forgotten.

At other times he was less despondent. He knew that Maxim Tsiepherkin and Sophy Peroff-

skaya often went to her entertainments ; and this was possibly the explanation : she loved, and was afraid to meet him.

So he wrote to her.

The words upon the page were burning with love. He wrote in the old style ; he was longing to see her face, her smiling lips, her beaming eyes ; and it was all nothing, save to two lovers.

When the letter was written, he gave himself up to solitude. He had fixed his last hope upon the words of entreaty which he had written ; and it seemed to him that, without her, he could have nothing more, for which to live.

What she had to suffer, he did not know ; would never know, perhaps.

Those two days that she passed with his letter at her heart, with those words, which to her were words of fire, ever before her, seemed too full of agony for her to bear her burden and go on living.

She wept and prayed ; for tears and prayers are all the consolation that a woman can find,

when her grief must abide with her ; when it must last for ever, and evermore.

There were only three to whom she confided her secret ; and they were Sophy Peroffskaya, little Zillah, and Maxim Tsiepherkin.

Sophy had no great respect for religion, but even to her it seemed that one so pure should keep herself free from what she herself deemed sin. It was by such acts that human nature was to be purified.

Zillah did not speak. She had loved and she had borne her reproof. The lash had stung her, but she had loved the hand that dealt her out the blows for her own good ; and there was no bitterness in her heart. She pitied him, but she could not speak.

Maxim Tsiepherkin was the one who advised Vera Michailovna ; and he spoke to her gently and kindly, not in a tone of command.

“Does your conscience tell you that it is wrong ?” he asked.

“Yes, yes,” she answered, her eyes full of

tears, "I know that it is wrong, but . . ." She could not continue, her sobs prevented her voice making itself heard.

"There is," he continued, "a little voice, that must be our guide between good and evil. Education teaches us to know the true from the false in a general way, and our own little voice will then tell us what is right for ourselves."

"Yes," she faltered. It was her condemnation.

"Vera Michailovna," he said, "we have each of us our cross to bear; and this is yours. You are parting with your last mite, and one day it will be returned to you. Suffering ennobles those who issue from it pure in heart, and we may fancy that the little voice within is the spirit which will survive the body, that it is in our power to destroy it or to make it black with guilt. There are black angels, you know, and white."

Maxim Tsiepherkin never laid down the law in a tone of superiority. You might always imagine from his voice that he had also had his troubles,

that he too had erred. No one, however, had anything to say against Maxim; he had done a good action here or there, but he never presumed upon them; he was always humble in spirit, yet ever ready to do his share of the work, whatever there was to be done.

Vera Michailovna heard his voice, and to her it seemed kindly advice, not the harsh condemnation which she had almost expected, even from him. She knew that he was striving to be a good man; and good men in St. Petersburg are generally eager to condemn their fellow-men.

There was this difference between Maxim Tsiepherkin and the rest. He was trying to follow the example of One who not only exhorted against evil, but could also forgive; they were following the example set by their fellow-citizens who could forgive nothing done contrary to their manners, customs, and ordinances.

Maxim put out his hand to Vera, but she did not see him, having buried her face in her hands; so he went out, and Sophy followed him in silence.

Vera wept on, and on, and on, until Zillah, who was by her side, threw her arms around her and kissed her. She, too, had loved, and had lost, Ivan Alexandroff.

They wept together ; then, they spoke ; but the words of women, who have loved and lost, are sacred.

That night Zillah stood by Ivan's side, and she told him that there was no hope for him upon this side of the grave. She told him this with all a woman's gentleness, knowing full well how bitter the pain would be.

Her voice quivered as she told him that never again in life could he take the hand of Vera Michailovna—never again.

The words which she had to say were said, and she was not very long in the telling ; then she left him at once, judging that it would be best for him to be alone.

Afterwards he remembered her gentleness and was grateful ; but their paths were for a time divided.

To drown his care, he worked away at the Bar; and he defended prisoners ably, being more easily able to do this, because he had learned from the Nihilists to wonder, not at the outcasts of society committing crime, but at the remaining of any particle of virtue in them after all their trials.

It is nothing not to be a thief if one has never been a-hungred.

He is virtuous who has known the cravings of hunger, who has been tempted to steal, and has stayed his hand.

To have taken bread then would have been no crime, though it was virtuous to abstain: the crime was with him who refused bread to the hungry.

It is an easy matter to love humanity, and to preach against and to abstain from indiscriminate charity, lest such should result in harm to the human race. It is, however, a far more difficult matter to recognize in two beggars standing at your door, or in two men, outcasts of society,

about to be tried for crime, two of those poor human brethren, for whom millions daily pray that the Deity may bestow upon them, day by day, their daily bread.

Alexandroff scarcely recognized them as brethren, though he did sometimes feed the poor ; still he was pleased to defend those accused of crime, and he was content with the honour and gratification which an occasional success could afford him.

Years passed. Time is said to pass quickly in the land of the Czar ; and it does pass quickly enough, if you look backwards instead of forwards. When one is waiting, coming time is always long on the road.

The buds had ripened into fruit, and the fruit had grown mellow, and some had fallen and other buds had come. The old landmarks were still there, the same old familiar landmarks ; every one knew them, and no one troubled about them.

As to our friends ; Zillah had become the wife of Maxim Tsiepherkin. No one had expected it.

Every one who knew either of them declared that it was as wrong as it could possibly be; the humanitarian and the actress, people said, were badly matched.

Maxim and Zillah, however, had thought otherwise; and they had not even consulted their own little worlds.

It had come about very slowly. Zillah's eyes had been opened at last, and she had learned that Maxim loved her. She was grateful to him for many little acts of kindness done; he had at last explained to her that she required a husband as a protection against the princes and noblemen of St. Petersburg, who think that a woman who sings in public cannot by any possibility be pure; and she had given herself to him.

There had been no romance in the matter. She had confessed to him that the love of her heart had been spent, and that she could never love again; but she would do her best to be kind to him and to make him happy. Maxim Tsiepherkin pressed her hands in his; then he had to

take one of them away from her, for there was a tear trickling down his cheek.

They were married in the usual way.

They lived together, however, in the manner common to those of the Nihilists who can overcome their passions. Neither of them wished for children, and they had none; if they had brought any into the world, some whom they fed would have been forced to go without. There are plenty to feed in the world, and there are enough who suffer.

She was his housekeeper, his companion, and his friend; and he was her teacher. They were very happy together; for Maxim considered little Zillah the best woman in the world, and she in time learned to consider him the best man.

Alexandroff had wandered away from their lives; she had not forgotten him, would never forget him, but her love for him was tranquil and undemonstrative; it was like love for one dead and gone. She did not think of him as of a man engaged in active life in the same town with her. No; it seemed to her as if a curtain had been

dropped between them ; and she remained before the stage, whilst he had disappeared behind the wings.

Maxim Tsiepherkin had become her ideal.

Each of us has an ideal, though we may not know what it is ; but it may only be champagne, or women with painted cheeks, after all.

Many of us do not know what our ideal is ; and Zillah did not. It came to her naturally enough to look up to Maxim as her teacher, to run to him for advice, to see that everything was prepared for his comfort, and to be careful that his favourite patients had a good share in the division of the food and wine that she took to the suffering poor.

She never thought of herself as a good woman. She was an actress, and she was pure ; she gained money and she spent it all, with the exception of the little that was necessary for herself and Maxim, upon the poor. All this followed as a matter of course ; for she had married Maxim Tsiepherkin, and he wished it.

If in some human dens near them, there was fever, and Maxim, fearing contagion, took food there himself, and would not allow her to accompany him; or if he was away from her all day, doing the work which we all owe to humanity, so that she could not see him before she went to the theatre or concert-room at night: she did not complain or upbraid him.

Once indeed, she did ask him, why he should try to prevent her being exposed to the contagion, since he did not hesitate to run the risk himself.

“It is not necessary, Zillah,” he answered. “I can take the food, and manage the nursing with the assistance of the women there; but if you were to fall ill, many of my patients would die of starvation.”

“But without your attentions, many of them would die of disease,” she said. He was her hero now; he had taught her to love the poor, and she had learned to love the friend of the poor.

“My little Zillah,” he said, “I am afraid it is partly my selfishness; for I could not part with

my little nurse, now that she has become a part of my life." He pressed her hand ; and then he noticed the deep, attentive, inquiring look in Zillah's eyes.

"And do you think I could afford to part with you now, Maxim?" she asked, her eyes filling with tears. The love, which had been for Ivan Ivanovitch, was now dead in her heart.

Maxim did not answer her. She put her head on his shoulder, and he kissed her forehead. He very rarely kissed her ; for he was not a boy, and it was not consistent with his age, he thought, to kiss and sigh, and say sweet words that meant absolutely nothing. Besides, he did not know that the fellow-actor on the world's stage, whom Zillah had once loved, had altogether disappeared from the scene.

Alexandroff, however, was quite gone.

Zillah was a pensive little creature in her way ; and perhaps it was Maxim Tsiepherkin himself, who had taught her to think. Be this as it may, she had even ventured to compare Ivan and

Maxim ; and the former had been found wanting in the balance.

Alexandroff had done nothing for Russia. He had talked a good deal, and the words and phrases he employed were more polished in style than those of Maxim ; but with him it had been all talk ; and there had been nothing done. Maxim, on the contrary, was always at work ; and every day some good was done. He had not freed Russia from despotism ; he had not cleared away the mud from the streets ; and he had not even promised to do these things ; but every day it was his task to lighten some man's, and some woman's burden.

Romance, indeed, he had never written, and he did not pay much attention to works of fiction. The only book he cared to read taught him his lesson, and Zillah had learned this from him : how each of us must sacrifice self for the sake of suffering humanity.

He was not so handsome as Ivan Ivanovitch ; but his face was lighted up with a kindly smile,

and his heart was overflowing with tender human sympathy.

The time came when Zillah learned to know what kind of a man it was whom she had married ; and she wished that a little more of that sympathy, so freely bestowed upon others, might have been hers.

The child had become a woman, and her heart yearned for the love of Maxim's heart. Her love for Ivan had gushed forth from her heart, like water from a spring by the mountain side ; but her love for Maxim dropped, like dew from the petals of a rose upon which the morning sun is shining.

Ivan Ivanovitch was like the butterfly, flitting from flower to flower, leaving each after a few sips, satisfied that he had imbibed there all that was worthy of his refined taste. Maxim, however, was the busy bee ; he was laying up a store of honey for others, and the beauty of the flowers only served him as a guide.

Zillah had said to herself at first:—"The heart

is a crystal shrine : if it be once shattered, it can never be repaired."

Afterwards she had learned :—" A good heart is better than a lovely face : however much it may be shattered, it may still become a thing of beauty and a joy for ever."





CHAPTER V.

AN AVENGER!

TIME did not leave even Alexandroff untouched; and the impressions, the fervour, and the light-heartedness of youth, all passed away from him. Still he did not marry; for Vera Michaïlovna had obtained so great an influence over him that he could not offer to another the heart which she had rejected.

Vera was still the heroine of his romance; but romance was dead in him. His MS. was still at his old rooms, and he would look at it occasionally, sigh, and think how different everything might have been. His romance would never now be read by admiring thousands; and

all his hopes were past, for he was, like the world, a failure.

He was a member of the new Bar; and he was industrious, and had already made a name as a criminal advocate. He was not a purist, and he did not consider himself a bad man because he employed the recognized devices of forensic strategy, and sought to conceal the weak points of his cases. He took a fee for his services in proportion to the wealth of the prisoner; but he never vividly described, as some other advocates would, the dangers to which the prisoner was exposed, in the hope of obtaining a higher retaining fee and the promise of a larger reward in case of acquittal.

By defending poor prisoners well, even when he only received a small sum for conducting the defence, and partly owing to his honesty, Alexandroff had obtained his reputation as an advocate; and this reputation served to obtain him employment, even in some of the most notorious cases.

When Vera Sassulitch was placed upon her

trial for attempting to murder Prince Potemkin, Alexandroff was engaged as counsel for the defence.

Vera Sassulitch, the popular heroine of the hour, was a woman who had passed the days of her girlhood amidst scenes of pain and suffering, and sights of woe and misery, which might have driven the stoutest-hearted to despair. Brooding over her own disgrace and the sufferings of others, whose only fault was their love of freedom, she had determined to avenge an outrage which had been perpetrated upon a man who was himself defenceless.

She was the daughter of a captain of the line; and it had been the ambition of her youth to throw some light upon the intellectual darkness, with which her country was enveloped. With this object she studied at Moscow, where she made the acquaintance of another school-girl, who had a brother studying at the university; and in course of time she became an intimate friend of the girl, whose family name was Netchaieff.

During a temporary absence of the student, Vera Sassulitch agreed to take charge of any letters which might be addressed to him ; but Netchaieff, having been denounced as a political enthusiast by a false friend, slew the traitor, and sought refuge in exile ; and the police then suspected the girl of being an accomplice.

The student had spoken words of encouragement to her ; he had told her that a woman might labour, as well as a man, for the good of the country ; and he had commended the task which she had set herself, by saying that the foundation of the future greatness of Russia would depend upon the education of the people.

Governesses were then badly wanted to instruct the rising generation ; and she studied with zeal, her enthusiasm enabling her to overcome all temptations to idleness ; and she obtained the necessary qualification as a governess, with honours.

Netchaieff was a criminal ; but because he had spoken and written words sweet to the enthusiastic

maiden's ears, she was not therefore necessarily an accomplice to his crime.

She was only seventeen, and she had taken no part in any political agitation. Her only desire was to devote herself to the task of educating some of the rising generation, which would in due time be called upon to decide the fate of the nation ; still for the police it sufficed that she was eager to play a noble woman's part in the drama of life, and they arrested her.

No evidence could be obtained to incriminate her, so she was never brought to trial. One year she passed in the Litioffski prison, and one year in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul ; then during several years she was subject to the supervision of the police, by whom she was forced to wander whither they would.

At the time of her liberation, Prince Potemkin had been appointed one of the chiefs of the secret police, as the reward for some dishonourable services, rendered to the Crown. The prince had somewhat modified his manner of living, being

induced to make this change, partly through fear of *delirium tremens*, and partly because it had come to his ears that it was not the intention of the Czar to receive him, unless he came to Court accompanied by his wife. He knew well enough that, when a man of his rank is not received, he had better select a place of exile for himself, if he does not wish the Autocrat to choose one for him.

A friend and boon-companion of the prince's had made a wager, at the Potemkin Palace, whilst in his cups, that he would distribute twenty copies of the Nihilist newspaper, *Land and Liberty*, without the police in any way interfering with, or arresting him, though he was to buy and also to sell the papers during broad daylight, on the Nevski Prospect. The prince gave information to the chief of the Third Section; and the "High Origin," having been arrested selling copies of *Land and Liberty* in the disguise of a hawker, was at once despatched to the mines, as a most dangerous character; whilst the prince, who showed great ability in discovering such plots as

these, was rewarded with a decoration and an appointment.

Prince Potemkin, an officer of the most important branch of the State service, was not a man to be trifled with; and had he been appointed Chancellor, he could not have expected the minor officials and the public to pay him greater deference than he then exacted.

One morning in July, Prince Potemkin visited the prison of St. Peter and St. Paul, in which was confined a considerable number of young men and women, accused of revolutionary propaganda. Some had been already condemned; but others, against whom it was not so easy for the police to produce any evidence whatever, had been waiting three years for trial.

The prince had a hatred of political prisoners, proof of which he was very eager to afford his divinely-appointed master, Alexander II. Generally, when a man, high in office, belonging to the secret police, visited the prisoners, no such fault could be found with governors as that they

treated the Nihilists with too great a leniency; and the statistics with reference to suicides in prison afforded a proof of the determination of these men.

But that morning the prince arrived unannounced, and found some of the prisoners walking about and talking in the inner court. This seemed to him an infraction of the prison rules, and he demanded an explanation of a prisoner named Bogoluboff. This man explained that he had already been condemned, whilst the others were not implicated in the same political offence as himself; but the prince deemed this answer impertinent, and ordered Bogoluboff to the punishment cell.

On the way thither, passing the prince a second time, he did not take off his cap, as he had previously done; and the officer of police avenged this insult to his general's uniform by knocking the man down with his stick. The women and young girls, who witnessed this brutal assault from the surrounding cells, allowed Prince Potemkin to

hear their exclamations of indignation ; and he, enraged by the outcry, resolved to make an example of Bogoluboff.

The lash had been abolished as an instrument of punishment and torture in 1863. Russian law, however, declares that the Czar is above all law, and the prince thought that he also might set the law at defiance. He ordered some warders to flog Bogoluboff ; and he threatened to have the same punishment inflicted upon all the other prisoners, many of whom were women and young girls.

From the prison, the excitement and indignation soon spread to the friends of the prisoners, and from them to the public generally. Remarks were made about *Bashi-Bazouks nearer home than Bulgaria*, by people who could certainly not be accused of entertaining any sympathy either for the Nihilists or the Liberals.

Still nothing was done.

Vera Sassulitch, who had passed in suffering those days of her life which should have been the happiest, could well afford to sympathize with

others, whose lot was then not unlike what hers had been. By chance, too, she read in the *Nòvoye Vrèmya*—"New Times"—a vivid description of the torture inflicted upon Bogoluboff.

With a petition in her hand, she approached the gallant prince who found it necessary to flog political prisoners, and to threaten women with the lash. This fellow was to Vera Sassulitch, the wielder of the tyranny from which she had suffered, since her seventeenth year.

She fired.

All these and some other details had been pretty generally known in St. Petersburg for some time, and accordingly the trial was awaited with intense interest. In the country where thirty years before the *knout* and the rod had played a very important part in the judicial and administrative institutions, a re-action had taken place; and at the time of which we are writing, a school-boy would have considered himself disgraced for life, if he had been subjected to a trifling application of the birch. To the Petersburgers of 1878, the

cries of Bogoluboff were the "groans of humiliated, insulted human dignity."

Russian political trials are not usually conducted in public ; an Imperial Secret Tribunal is generally considered a more fitting instrument to deal with those who dare to raise their hands against the despot or his minions. The public mind, however, was incensed at the wrongs which a woman, herself ill-used, had determined to redress ; and Count Pahlen, the Minister of Justice, had pledged himself that the jury should be one uninfluenced by any political sympathy with the accused.

The jury selected was one which might well be expected to sympathize, rather with an official of the Crown than with the prisoner. There were four Aulic Councillors, one of whom, Athanasius Lochoff, was foreman : one Collegiate Councillor, one College Registrar, one Titulary Councillor, one hereditary nobleman, an artist, an assistant at the Demidoff Asylum, a tutor, and a tradesman.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the trial,

the three judges, young men in dark-blue uniforms adorned with gold lace, took their seats on the bench, with the public prosecutor on the right hand, and the clerk of the court on the left, in uniforms not easily distinguishable from those of the judges.

Full publicity had been secured by sending tickets of admission to the leading representatives of the Press; and on the bench, behind the judges, there were some of the highest dignitaries of the realm, and among others, the Imperial Chancellor, Prince Gortschakoff.

The procedure need not be described in detail, for it closely resembled that of an English Criminal Court. The "packed" jury was duly empanelled, and the witnesses examined. Then the statement of the prisoner was read:—

"Having arrived in St. Petersburg, I heard about the incident in the prison from several persons whom I happened to meet. They related how the prisoners who had made the disturbance were placed in the punishment cells, and how

they were there maltreated by the policemen. About Bogoluboff, I heard that he had been flogged till he stopped shrieking, overcome by faintness. There may have been some exaggeration in the account ; but as I had myself experienced long solitary confinement, I could imagine what a frightful impression the whole affair must have produced on all the political prisoners, not to speak of those who had previously been subjected to maltreatment.

“ I know by experience the morbidly excited, nervous condition produced by solitary imprisonment ; and the majority of the prisoners had been already waiting for trial more than three years. Some of them had gone mad, and others had committed suicide. What cruelty it was to make them bear all that, simply because one of them had not taken off his cap when he met an official a second time ! It did not seem to me to be a punishment, but rather an insult inflicted through personal enmity, possibly caused by wounded vanity.

“Such an occurrence could not and ought not, I thought, to pass unnoticed. I waited to see whether some one would take the matter in hand; but all were silent, and there was nothing to prevent Prince Potemkin, or any other official, from repeating such arbitrary acts.

“Seeing no other means of directing public attention to the affair, I determined, at the price of my own ruin, to prove that a human being cannot be insulted in that way with impunity. It is a terrible thing to raise one’s hand against a fellow-creature; but I could find no other means. . . . It was all the same to me whether I killed or wounded the prince, when I fired at him; I did not aim at any particular part of the body.”

The Public Prosecutor did his best to secure a conviction. Whatever could be urged against the accused, he put forward vigorously. He contended that whatever wrong may be done, whatever grievance a person may suffer, it is not permissible for a subject to take the law into his

or her hands, so as to be at one time judge, jury, and executioner.

He said nothing of that foundation-stone of Russian law which declares the Czar to be above all law, and nothing of the difficulties in the way of a private person, seeking redress against a high official of the empire. The person wronged could not communicate his grievance to His Imperial Majesty, for it was treason to address him in public, and the humble suppliant could not approach him within the Imperial palaces.

Passing over such minor details as these, the Public Prosecutor pointed out the heavy calibre of the revolver chosen, and stated that during her exile, the accused, in the exercise of the avocation of an obstetrical nurse, must have become sufficiently well acquainted with the anatomy of the human body, to know when she was firing at one of the most vital parts.

The Public Prosecutor did not attempt either to blame or to defend the actions of General

Prince Potemkin, whom he did not call as a witness. He strongly objected to two witnesses, prisoners confined in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, being called for the defence, and the secret police used their influence with the Court to uphold the objection.

At the conclusion of his address, the Public Prosecutor said:—

“ Even if Vera Sassulitch was urged on to do the deed with which she stands accused, by motives which she considered patriotic, I must, nevertheless, ask for a conviction. I am ready to accept the feelings of Vera Sassulitch as facts: the Court, however, is bound to measure these feelings, as soon as they are converted into deeds, by the standard of the law.”

For a moment there was a hushed silence; then Ivan Alexandroff rose to address a jury and public, mainly composed of those whose official positions bound them most firmly to the despotism, against which the woman in the dock had urged an armed resistance. They were men,

however, who listened ; not beasts, endowed with reason.

All present knew that the life of this woman had been made desolate by the cruel sentence of the secret police. Others had also suffered ; for it was no rare occurrence for a man or woman suspected of employing some political influence against the Government, to be secretly arrested and sent to Siberia ; so all hearts could sympathize with a victim of the Third Section.

In Russia, juries are apt to consider the moral, rather than the technical, crime. If a man is charged with assaulting the police, and it is proved that the prisoner first saw a friend, or even a stranger, brutally attacked by the guardians of the law, a Russian jury will generally acquit ; in fact, so invariably has this been the case that the police now prefer to settle these little disputes for themselves, rather than bring them before the public courts.

Alexandroff did not attempt to prove that, in the eyes of the law, a crime had not been com-

mitted ; but he urged that such a woman as Vera Sassulitch was worthy of compassion, rather than of condemnation to death, or to resubjection to the tortures of such men as General Prince Potemkin, who break the law in order to uphold it ; and he begged for an acquittal, in the interest of the public security, in the name of Justice.

The biography of the prisoner was an Act of Accusation against the authorities and against the police ; and her counsel spoke of her maiden joys and hopes, which were doomed never to bloom into womanhood.

“The time between her eighteenth and twentieth years,” Alexandroff said, “was for her full of woe, misery, and degradation. But for a maiden, these years of youth should be a most beautiful time, when life still appears spotless and pure, and when impressions are most powerful and may last for a lifetime. It is the time of the budding of love, the time when childhood ceases, and the girl glides into the fuller consciousness

of womanhood: the time of fanciful reverie and enthusiasm, to which, when days and years have rolled and she has known the joys and woes of motherhood, she may recall her thoughts and think it all a dream."

Alexandroff was enthusiastic; it was no calm logical debate; it was no tranquil reasoning of aye or nay; but he was pouring out the words which came, whence he knew not, showering them forth in defence of her who, though a woman, had ventured to take upon herself the load of another's suffering.

"Gentlemen of the Jury," he continued, "you know in what company Vera Sassulitch was forced to pass her best years. The walls of a casemate were her companions, and she was not even allowed to see her mother. Sometimes, indeed, she would hear that her mother had come and had given a message of greeting, but that was all she was permitted to learn. Locked up alone in her cell, with no occupation or pastime, she could only cool her throbbing brows against the iron

bars of her cage, as she lay there the victim of a mere suspicion!

“Only a turnkey to bring her food! save him no human being to approach her for months! Now and again a mocking voice without might say:—‘Prisoner, are you still alive? You have done no harm to yourself?’ Or a stranger, a foreigner might come, and they would show her, a maiden beautiful exceedingly, with her hair dishevelled, with her eyes wildly gleaming, a creature with human instinct and human love, immured in a den fit only for a savage beast!

“Far, far away from everything human! Only the rattling of locks and bolts, the clack of guns shouldered or grounded, or the striking of the clock of the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, broke upon the monotony, or marked the passing hour. To nourish the maiden’s feelings of friendship or love, there was only the knowledge of the sufferings of human creatures like herself in the dens to the right and to the left; and all her pent-up sympathy was called forth for those who

were passing their wretched days in the same sad way. Thus it was that there arose in the heart of Vera Sassulitch a warm-hearted sympathy for every prisoner of State. Thus it chanced that there was kindled within her a fire of hate against those who employ the power that a mighty sovereign has entrusted to them, to gloat their eyes upon heart-rending scenes of brutal suffering, inflicted upon those who are powerless to defend themselves.

“ Two years were passed in the dungeon. Two inquiries were held in secret ; nothing could be proved against her. She was set free.

“ Free ! Free ! Free !

“ ‘ We will go into the country, darling. There you will forget and recover,’ the mother said to the heart-broken girl.

“ Ten days passed. They were preparing to depart from the scenes of her suffering. A policeman presented himself at her home ; he had come to arrest her. The tears of the mother and the shrieks of the daughter were in vain ; for weak

women must bow to the sovereignty of the law.

“A few more hopeless days were spent in the dungeon. Then one morning she was seized, and without time even to throw a mantle over her dress, she was hurried off, an exile, to a distant province. She might have died upon the way, but one of her escort took off his fur cloak and threw it around her shoulders.

“At Kretsi she was set free, an exile under the supervision of the police. With no money and no clothes, she was left to care for herself. By chance, she found a kind woman who held out a helping hand to the unfortunate one; but an exile like Vera is allowed no friend, and she was soon hurried on again, first to Tver, then to Saligatitch, then to Kharkoff.

“Finally she was *pardoned*. Years had passed in sorrow and misery; and she was an outcast, for whom the world had no sympathy.

“Miserable and overcome with the burden of her suffering, willing to find shelter from her

misfortunes, even in the quiescence of the tomb, she read an account of the torture inflicted upon another political prisoner, a man whom she had never seen ; but like herself, he had suffered a martyrdom, and this sufficed to surround him in her mind with the halo of romance, and to win for him the heartfelt sympathy of one who had been born to suffer.

“ In 1863, an imperial *ukase* abolished the knout as an instrument for the punishment of prisoners ; but nevertheless the gallant general, Prince Potemkin, sentenced Bogoluboff, a man of good education and of noble mien, to be flogged, for an alleged want of respect.

“ When it became known throughout the prison, there was a great outcry. The prisoners thought that the old days of secret torture were returning ; and women and girls gave vent to their fears and indignation in passionate words.

“ His Highness knew how to punish women, who had become insubordinate through terror, with a refinement of cruelty. He collected a

number of rods, and bade the warders intimate by pantomimic gestures, that a general whipping would take place; and these men knew that it would cost them their places, if they dared to disobey.

“Meanwhile Bogoluboff was led to the whipping-post. He was not informed why he was to be punished, and he thought that indignation would lend him strength to resist; but he was seized by the iron grip of the gaolers’ hands. The regular counting of the strokes and the sound of the lash were heard; then a groan escaped from the sufferer, a groan arising as much from the feelings of humiliation and of outraged honour, as from physical pain. At last, silence reigned once more, and the sacred act was accomplished!”

The audience and even the jury were overcome by the barrister’s eloquent words. They represented the nobility and the wealth of the capital; and the Government stood condemned, as the Court rang with applause.

“Brooding over the disgrace to which a political prisoner had been subjected in the very capital,” Alexandroff continued, “by an official of high personal and hereditary rank, raised thoughts of revenge in the mind of a tender woman. The terrible memory of her own ruined life, and the account of this horrible scene in the ‘New Times,’ so excited her feelings that she lost all control over herself; and over and over again she asked herself, ‘Who will awaken the public conscience?’”

“Then she presented herself, petition in hand, before this prince, who was to her the very abomination of tyranny, whilst Bogoluboff represented the history of her own past, the history of her shelterless wanderings over Russia, the history of her own misery and helplessness. So the shot was fired; and she stood calm and motionless, the image of an *Avenger*!”

Alexander laid great stress upon this last word, which he spoke pointing to Vera Sassulitch, the prisoner in the dock. For a moment there

was silence ; then the hall resounded with applause.

“An accused person,” said one of the judges; when order was restored, “cannot certainly be considered an infallible commentator upon an event with which he or she is connected. Criminals, however, may be divided into two groups : those who are led by selfish impulses, and who generally try to mask the truth by lying statements ; and those who commit crimes from no motive of personal profit, and who entertain no desire to conceal the deeds which they have done. You, gentlemen of the jury, are in a position to judge whether the statements of Vera Sassulitch merit your confidence, and to which type of transgressors she belongs.

“If you believe the statement of the prisoner, you must bear in mind that it is not necessary to kill an official of the empire in order to draw attention to a crying evil ; still you must also remember the ordinary difficulties which a person in the position of the prisoner would encounter,

in order to make her complaint known. But these difficulties, however great, are no excuse for murder.

“Perhaps you may find in the facts revealed by the inquiry an indication of Vera Sassulitch’s wish to wreak vengeance upon General Prince Potemkin, not of a determination to kill him. The public prosecutor has mentioned that Vera Sassulitch purposely chose a revolver of a very dangerous kind, and that she fired from the closest proximity. But upon these grounds, the intention of the accused to commit murder cannot be absolutely inferred, for the choice of this revolver may have been the result of accidental circumstances, and in the present case there could have been no thought of firing from a distance.

“If the accused had wished to raise a question of public importance, her object might have been attained by a mere insult to Prince Potemkin. Facts alone, however, must guide you in your conclusions. It is my duty also to remind you that wherever a doubt is possible, the law enjoins

you to interpret the case in favour of the accused."

The jury withdrew to deliberate on their verdict; and in a little less than an hour they returned with one of acquittal.

Loud and continued applause arose amongst the crowded public in the hall of justice; and a sudden blush covered the face of Vera Sassulitch.

"You are free," the judge said, addressing her, and she left the court, but only to be re-arrested the same day.

Outside the building thousands were waiting for the verdict; and they set up a jubilant shout, when it was made known.

An enthusiastic crowd surrounded Alexandroff; and men lifted him on to their shoulders, carried him across the street amidst "bravos!" and accompanied him to his rooms, singing and rejoicing all the way along.

Vera Sassulitch had escaped from the court in a carriage, but on her way home she was arrested by the orders of the secret police, to

whom alone it is now known in what part of Russia in Europe or Asia she is. A young man was shot who defended her: that was all the public could learn.

The people in the streets cheered Alexandroff, because they could not bestow their applause upon the popular heroine: such was popularity!

Ivan Ivanovitch had longed for success; but he won it too late, when he had become indifferent to all things. He could not have his young life back again, to live it over again; he had spent it in weaving a romance, when he should have been acting; and the past would not come back to him, though it hovered near him pitilessly.

A few more years would come, and wane, and go; and old age, like a vulture, would settle upon him, claw his brow, and perhaps pick out his eyes.

In the future, he could foresee only trivial troubles, bitter repentance, and perpetual punishment for the past. Wealth he would have in plenty now that he cared for it not; but no love, for which he longed. He could have his box at

the opera, fine horses, women that were to be bought with a price . . . bah ! he hated them, and his cup of sorrow was filled to the brim.





CHAPTER VI.

TWO GENERATIONS.

THE acquittal of Vera Sassulitch was the signal for the commencement of a struggle between despotism and the lovers of freedom ; for the Nihilists regarded the general approval which the verdict obtained as a sign of the times, whilst the Czar and his myrmidons called to mind the struggles which had taken place between sovereigns and people in other lands.

All revolutions in Russia have been caused by the nobility ; but Alexander II. had completely destroyed the power of the nobles, and from them as a class, he had nothing either to hope or to fear. The serfs, upon whom the nobles had formerly depended, were now free men, only

requiring a political organization to become the one power in the State, before which Czar, Tchin, and Aristocracy would be forced to bow.

The artisans of the towns, who were called Nihilists, were attempting by means of circles with about thirteen members, and by associations, to which a representative of each of these circles belonged, to form such an organization; but the Government now suppressed even the most moderate of the Liberal newspapers, and arrested the Nihilists upon a charge of having taken part in a "criminal propaganda against the State."

The prisons of St. Petersburg and Moscow were filled; and those Nihilists who retained their liberty began to declare that the time had come, when they should strike a decisive blow at despotism. But the numbers of the Nihilists, though constantly increasing, were not sufficient to overthrow the Government; and they fully understood what a crime it is for men to precipitate a revolt, in which the blood of thousands may be shed in vain.

They continued to work energetically, striving to win adherents in the army and in the *Tchin*, and not without success; but the peasants, who had never visited the towns, would not be persuaded that it was possible that the Czar could be otherwise than divinely appointed, and it was necessary for them, in order to organise an insurrection of the peasants, to allow the liberated serf to retain his belief that the landed proprietors and the officials of the empire were conspiring together, to prevent the Czar carrying out his liberal plans for the advantage of his faithful peasantry.

At St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other large towns, youths hastened to leave the universities, before their courses were completed, that by adopting some mechanical calling or handicraft, they might share the life of the working people; and workmen flocked to the secret teachers, eager to obtain knowledge.

Sophy Peroffskaya played an active part in teaching the artisans and other working-men of the towns, to know both their rights and their

powers. Wearing the dress of a poor working woman, she carried pitchers of water and fagots of wood upon her shoulders; and she went amongst the people to arouse their hatred of despotism.

More arrests were made, and twelve hundred were thrown into prison, charged with taking part in the "criminal propaganda against the State." Sophy was one of those arrested, but shortly before the police made this raid, she had changed her apartments, and the police found nothing to compromise her.

She was kept in prison a year, as a warning to other young ladies who might be tempted to adopt Liberal ideas; and then, owing to the influence of her relatives, she was discharged under police supervision, bound over to appear before the tribunal which would eventually be appointed to try all those arrested at St. Petersburg for offences against the Government.

Sophy Peroffskaya went to her mother, whom she had not seen for years; and she was greeted

with a hearty welcome. Sophy's mother understood that she had fallen behind the times, and she was not unwilling to allow the young generation to take her place. The emancipation of the serfs, the new land regulations, the new law courts, and even the new fashions: she was unable to understand.

Alexandroff was also in the country, having thought it advisable to spend a little time with his father after the acquittal of Vera Sassulitch; and there he renewed his acquaintance with Sophy, the estate of her mother and that of his father being within a day's drive.

He had seen but little of the Nihilists in the last few years. Maxim Tsiepherkin had visited him at long intervals, and these visits he had lately returned, for he now entertained a most enthusiastic admiration for little Zillah, who had become the most popular singer in St. Petersburg; but he had made no new acquaintances among the Nihilists, except with those who had become his clients.

When Alexandroff returned to Iksan, he found every one and every thing much changed.

His father had become an old man, and had rid himself of all the ideas which he had formerly entertained. He no longer believed in the popes, in the peasants, or the new officials; but he thought that everything was going to the bad as quickly as possible.

"The peasants are a set of thieves," he told his son, as soon as they were able to sit down quietly together. "They would steal our heads, if they could. You may believe what I say, for I can have no object in telling you a falsehood; and I would not lie, if I had. They go into our forests at night, and cut down the wood; even the willows by the road-side are not safe from them, I can assure you."

"Perhaps it is their own heads, and not ours, which they wish to possess," Alexandroff answered.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed the old man, "they are quite free. We can do nothing with them, even

when they refuse to pay the land-dues, and take to stealing wood."

"As to the wood," Ivan answered, "I suppose you would not like them to die of cold, or to eat their food uncooked; and all these things have to be considered, you know."

The old man did not look at matters in this light, the peasants wanted more wages, and he had even sent a complaint to the Imperial Commission, which had been sitting under the presidency of the Minister of Domains. In his complaint, he declared that the emancipated serf was an idle, dissipated, worthless, thieving lout. He would not work, but he drank away the money he did not earn; he would idle away the time he was employed for his former master, and would steal wood and straw for kindling purposes; and all the excuse he would make, when caught, would be, "God planted the forests."

Nicholas Petrovitch had altered, too. He had lost his old enthusiasm. He had returned some years before from St. Petersburg to his estate, and

had found that the reforms did not work as well as he had anticipated. He had emancipated his serfs, before the time at which he was bound to do so by the law; he had built schools, and had provided teachers, for the education of the young peasants; and he had introduced a reaping machine, which became communal property.

His harem had been abandoned when he went to St. Petersburg, and he never restored it. As to his former "wives," some of them remained with him, and some went away; but the majority settled upon the land he gave them. Some of those who left became governesses to the daughters of the smaller shop-keepers in the large towns, whilst those who remained looked forward to the great changes which Nicholas Petrovitch had predicted. Nicholas had succeeded in making these peasant girls discontented with their lot; but he had set them no examples of virtuous conduct, and they were eager to overcome an evil world with weapons which were themselves evil. In the towns, they led a life of immorality, and

belonged to that class which gave to the Socialist party much of their ill repute; in the country, many of them married peasants, ruled their husbands, and taught the villagers to oppose might to might, even when it was impossible for them to do so with success.

In town and country alike, they offered a continual resistance to all acts of the Government, and finally, many an one of them was placed under the supervision of the police. This supervision is an outrage on human dignity; and removed by the police to places far away from any friend, one by one they raised their hands against their cruel oppressors, and died in Siberia, if they were strong enough to support the hardships of the journey to the land of snow and ice. Pity, they deserve, not blame; for there was no one to teach them how to lead nobler lives.

Nicholas Petrovitch had forgotten them and theirs; and he would have been surprised, if any one had blamed him for his conduct; for he considered his enlightened policy praiseworthy.

When he welcomed Alexandroff home to Iksan, he had lost almost all the beauty for which he had once been celebrated in the neighbourhood ; but he still retained his kind and winning manner. He had not seen as much of Ivan's father in the past few years, as before ; the old man's bones were getting too weak to bear the shaking on the roads, which were very bad ; and when they met, it was Nicholas Petrovitch who drove over to see his old friend. This he did but seldom ; the old man had changed his politics, and was opposed to every thing and every one : to serf-emancipation, Liberalism, and Conservatism ; to the priests, peasants, nobles, Tchinovniks, Czar, Nihilists, and all.

The old man was thoroughly discontented with the world ; but he was by no means anxious to leave it for a better. He could not even look forward with pleasure to the arrival of his son, for fear of ridicule upon account of his old-fashioned ways.

On the evening of Alexandroff's arrival at

Iksan, every one embraced one another; then an appetizer was taken, and the seniors smacked their lips; but Ivan did not do this, as it was no longer the custom in St. Petersburg.

They sat down to dinner; and Nicholas Petrovitch asked a great many questions about the capital, the men in it, and the books. But it was all changed. The streets were altered; there were other men and women; and as to books, quite new ideas had sprung up since Nicholas Petrovitch was good enough to visit the capital.

Nicholas Petrovitch felt hurt; for it did not seem right to him that so much should have changed in so short a time without his assistance.

As to the old man, Ivan's father, he grumbled away as if he himself had been a farmer.

"The weather is never of any use here!" he declared. "If we want it fine, it rains; and when rain is wanted, we do not get any. This all comes of our having so many priests hanging about doing nothing; like hares, they bring bad luck."

“‘The one loves the pope, the other his wife,’” Nicholas Petrovitch remarked. It must be remembered that the old man had married a pope’s daughter.

“One may have too much of a church which is ‘all organs, dimensions, senses, and passions,’ if it be always with you,” the old man retorted.

“And which promises you too much heat in the future,” Nicholas Petrovitch continued.

“Every thing has changed for the worse,” said the old man. “Formerly we kept no accounts, and we drank champagne; but now we keep accounts, and drink beer. Such is life! I verily believe a Russian peasant would pluck a dove for its feathers. I have done every thing for them, and I am most attacked; you may believe me, for falsehoods are useless, when one has good intentions.”

Nevertheless, the old man was able to produce some bottles of very fair champagne; and in his mode of living, there was no sign of small beer. Still he complained very bitterly.

“Ivan, my son,” he said, “you see the house is falling to pieces. If we do not soon get some money out of these rascals, it will fall down about my head, and then, where will it be for your children?”

“That will not matter; I am not married, and do not mean to be, you know,” Ivan answered.

“Oh! that is it, is it? Marriage has gone out of fashion, eh? Well, well, marriage is all very well for women, but as for men, perhaps we are better without it. Still, Ivan Ivanovitch, think the matter over; you know there has been an Ivan Ivanovitch seated here, where I am sitting, for many generations . . .”

“Yes, yes, the old tale, father; but I am not a marrying man, you know . . .”

“Ah! what a generation it is!” the old man exclaimed. “‘Not like its father or its mother, but like a passing stranger!’”

“We all have a little dream of love once in our lives, father,” Alexandroff said, speaking in a more

gentle tone, "but marriages you know are made in heaven, and they don't answer so well here, where no one is able to marry for love. If one attempts it, it is like sailing about on a river, against wind and stream."

"Still a man must marry, or how is he to get a family around him? Besides it is necessary to have some division of labour. A man, a woman"

"A man, a woman, and a horse! Ah! father, you forget; that is all changed. They are no longer the unit of labour."

"Everything has gone wrong. Still," continued the old man, with a thoughtful look on his face, "if I had not married, you would not have been here."

"The greatest evil is existence," Alexandroff answered. Life in the country seemed to him intolerably dull.

"Ah! ah! You are coming to Schopenhauer," Nicholas Petrovitch exclaimed with delight. "This life is the most detestable, and the world,

the worst possible. It is necessary for us to deliver ourselves from the evil of existence, and we can only accomplish this by the quiescence of the will. We must suppress passions and all desires ; because all evil is caused by the affirmation of will. The carrying on of life being an evil, the state of unconsciousness is good ; and the best thing in this world then is to fall unconscious."

Nicholas Petrovitch looked, whilst he was raking up this philosophy of his, as if he were enjoying life immensely.

He had expected Alexandroff to answer him ; and his face fell when the old man began :—

"I am sure, my son, I am very sorry . . . "

"Come, come, father, I beg you ! What an idea to excuse one's self for such a thing as that ! " the young man said, thinking with an indulgent tenderness of the good and feeble nature of his father.

"Do not let us talk any more about it, I beg you," said Nicholas Petrovitch. "If the young

men are all tired of life, they can go out and shoot themselves."

This did not serve to enliven the old man ; he could not help shivering ; he was not above old prejudices.

"Let us talk of something else, father ; say, of the wood, from a legal point of view."

"O my son, you are a member of the new Bar, too. You see I forget ; and old age must be my excuse. He is like the cat ; you may throw what you choose on his back, but nothing will break it. You will have to excuse me, you know ; for I belong to the generation which has passed away."

"And I to the present !" said Nicholas Petrovitch. "A man's brain is in its prime when he is about fifty, if only those younger and older would acknowledge this."

"And I belong to the future generation," said Ivan, but he did not speak from the heart, as did Nicholas Petrovitch ; he felt that the next generation would be more self-sacrificing and less

egotistical. Since all hope of obtaining the hand of Vera Michailovna had passed, he had become aware of his own imperfections. He might have won her, if he had wooed her with all the fervour which such a maid had deserved; but he had been content to wait, and he had lost her for ever. Now he flattered himself that he was capable of making any sacrifice for the people, if he could only have the love of Vera Michailovna; but whilst he had no hope of happiness, he did not feel inclined to suffer a martyrdom for the sake of poor suffering humanity, which to him seemed absolutely repulsive.

Like his father, he was a pessimist, though his pessimism was of a new-fashioned type; and he found Iksan very dull, though he did try to make the old man's life a little more cheerful. But the lord of Iksan considered that he had been despoiled of his own, and he was not to be comforted. He wanted to spend the land-dues on repairs for the manor-house, and it was nothing to him that the peasants would be forced to pay

in the end ; he had, or he thought he had, been a great man in the past ; and now his glory and honour were departed.

The old man spent all his time in grumbling ; and neither he, nor Nicholas Petrovitch, was an agreeable companion for Ivan Ivanovitch, who had other ideas and other sympathies than those of his seniors.

Nicholas Petrovitch was very loath to listen to the opinions of those who did not agree with him ; he was writing a book of his own reminiscences, and he had formed a scheme for the future government of Russia. He was more liberal than the men of '25, and he was willing to bestow some rights upon the peasants ; but he would retain the powers of monarchy and nobility with all their abuses. He could not understand that his theories were old-fashioned—that they were not even popular.

“The times change, and we are changed.” ∴

The Iksan manor-house was duller than ever ; and Ivan Ivanovitch often drove over to see Sophy

Peroffskaya, and to discourse with her upon serious subjects.

Sophy was not idle, as Ivan was; but during the day she would work in the fields, cultivating them, and sowing also a little intellectual seed; and in the evening she would teach the children of the peasantry to read and write. She had pledged her word to the police that before her trial she would take no part in the revolutionary propaganda, and in consequence of this agreement and the influence of her relatives, she was allowed to pass the rest of the time before trial at her mother's estate.

The police, under whose supervision she was, regarded education and revolutionary ideas with equal abhorrence, having learned by experience that the latter are the result of knowledge. They wished the peasant to remain a dull, unintelligent animal, content to work like a machine, without demanding any large part of the product of his labour, to which education would show him he was entitled. So Sophy Peroffskaya was

forbidden to teach the peasants, with whom she had soon become upon the most friendly terms.

As to the wood, she quite agreed with them that they were entitled to it; and she explained to her mother that Nature—the peasants said God—had provided the forests for the advantage of those who required to use the wood. When this matter was settled to the satisfaction of the peasantry, the Village Assembly returned Sophy and her mother a vote of thanks.

After this, the police persecuted her more than ever, and she was glad when the trials commenced. She was one of the few who were acquitted; but at night she was again arrested that she might be sent under police supervision to Vologda.

At a station on the way, she was placed for the night in a waiting-room, at the door of which two guards were stationed. These men fell asleep, and she managed to enter a train going to Khar-koff, where she lived for some time under a false name.

The Russian police, when they lose a prisoner,

prefer to say nothing about the matter, rather than let it be known, in the hope of effecting a capture; and to this custom Sophy Peroffskaya owed her escape.

She became an active propagandist; she was very skilful in selecting those best fitted to be her assistants; she made the acquaintance of a large number of students and workmen, and thousands owed to her their first notions of socialism, and their first moral awakening.

Alexandroff felt very lonely after her departure; but he did his best to comfort his father's last days; and he sold the wood, and employed the money in repairs. The old man was soothed by the sound of the hammers; he pottered about after the workpeople, and told the peasants, whenever he met them, that he had sold the wood to prevent them stealing it.

His former serfs provoked him beyond forbearance, for they would not even bow themselves down to the ground when he passed; and he would point out, with satisfaction, their little worn-

out horses, and declare that they never had to use such beasts in his day. But his day was past.

When they failed to pay him what he considered fitting marks of respect, he would sometimes fire up. The law, he would declare, gave them arable, but no pasture land; and he could starve their horses and cattle to death. Upon these occasions, he swore at, and frightened them; and they, still owing him for their land and liberty, and not knowing that all his power had been taken away from him, would kiss the sleeve of his coat, or even the shoe on his foot, as they had done in the old days of serfdom.

But the *barrin* was weak and old, and when he had enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing the house in proper repair, he yielded up his spirit without pain.

The nobles of the district came to the funeral, though they had known but little of the old man. The majority entertained some vague, generous, humanitarian aspirations, which they did not wish to put into effect at their own cost; they dressed

their servants in European costumes, and on their return from the funeral, they talked of railways, patent ploughs, reapers, and of the Slav race as if it were their sweetheart.

To Alexandroff, the old house was lonely and sad ; and he thought of what his life might have been in it, if he had won such a wife as Vera Michailovna. But it was vain to think with regret of what might have been ; it was his fate to pass through life all alone, and old age would steal upon him, with no one to speak to him a single word of comfort or solace. In the wide world, he would be alone, all alone with his misery ; and it might all have been so different, and she might have been his. But this, indeed, was the hardest to bear ; the knowledge that the fault had been all his own.







CHAPTER VII.

DUST TO DUST.



THE life of Prince Potemkin, after the formal separation between him and Vera Michaïlovna, was, if possible, more loathsome and abominable than it had ever been before. Every one talked of him, and of the princess whose drawing-rooms were such a success; and the comparison drawn was not to his advantage.

Alexander II. had a way of not listening to gossip which was directed against his personal friends. These fortunate individuals might accumulate their millions of roubles by plundering the public, by accepting bribes, or by mixing up

their own accounts with those of the State; and they might even print a special copy of a newspaper for the emperor, lest his eyes should alight upon an ordinary copy, in which their little doings were exposed with unwonted audacity. All these things could be done by Alexander's particular friends with impunity; and Count Adelberg, the Minister for Home Affairs, had tried them all.

Prince Potemkin, however, was not one of Alexander's "good fellows;" he was neither an agreeable nor an affable man, and the emperor expected his old cronies to amuse him, in return for the favours which he lavished upon them.

Men like Lertoffski, steady working animals, might fail to be amusing, and yet be tolerated; but the prince was not even useful.

The scandal caused by the trial of Vera Sassulitch was fatal to his career in the Imperial service; and he was called upon to resign his seat on the Imperial Commission and his office in the Third Section, the latter being the more lucrative post.

The writers for the press gave vent to their

feelings, and a bright future was predicted for Russian justice, now that men like Potemkin were no longer allowed to take any share in its administration.

Every one rejoiced ; except the prince, whose dismissal from office prevented him from appearing at Court, where he had been received, long after he had been excluded from all other decent society.

The bottle was his only consolation ; and now, since he had betrayed a boon-companion, he was unable to induce other old reprobates of rank to take any part in his orgies. So he drank all the more, and more than once he was attacked by *delirium tremens*.

When an attack was coming on, he would send for the priests and the holy picture of the Virgin ; and he would remain under the influence of the Church until he was cured, when he would return to his evil ways.

During the continuance of the disease, he could not sleep, and terrible pictures pre-

sented themselves to him, evolved from past memories.

“Take it away! Take it away!” he would shout, lying half-dressed, and unconscious of what was going on around him, though he was able to suffer pain.

“I was not guilty—I never murdered her—it was not I—have mercy upon me—I did not strangle her—oh! the eyes are horrible—why don’t you bury her?—may the Devil have mercy upon me!”

When he had done shouting, he would lie quite still for a time, as if he fancied himself dead, and then he would continue:—

“Oh! the heat, the heat! Don’t let me burn; give me water, for I am all on fire. Oh! have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me!”

He would groan as if in agony; and at these times he may perhaps have suffered a little of the punishment he so well deserved.

Directly he rose from his bed of sickness, he began his old life over again; and in high official

circles it was often the subject of a wager, whether he would be gathered to his fathers the next time the hand of fate struck him down. The doctors were all for his dying, but in spite of them he managed to live.

The censor of the press did not suppress those newspapers which commented severely upon the prince's mode of life, urging that there should be some limit even to a prince's immorality; and the scandal was very great, for when the few ladies of the fashionable society of St. Petersburg who were pure and noble would call upon the princess, they would see the carriages of those women who were proud of their infamy standing before the principal entrance to the Potemkin Palace. Finally an official intimation was sent to the prince that if he did not reform his manner of living, he would be sent either to Siberia or to a madhouse.

The prince would have at once proceeded to the West, if an old fellow, whom he had just taken into his service as *valet*, had not proposed a simple

plan by which the prince could cover himself with honour and glory.

The Nihilists were becoming more daring every day, and to accuse a man of Nihilism was certain exile to Siberia for the accused and honour for the accuser ; but it was no ordinary Nihilist whom the *valet* wished to accuse ; he desired to expose a plot, upon a larger scale than that discovered at Saratoff.

The plotters met, the man told Potemkin, at Alexandroff's rooms, No. 91 Nevski Prospect, but they always entered the house by the entrance at No. 12 Gontcharnaya Oulitza. The leaders who met there were not, he said, ordinary Nihilists against whom only the usual charge could be brought of "endeavouring to gain the confidence of the workmen, especially those engaged in factories, and seeking, under pretext of teaching them to read and write, to make them discontented with the present state of society."

All the Nihilists whom they would secure should be, he promised, men of a different stamp

altogether; for they were all terrorists, engaged in a plot to destroy the Romanoff family, and each had his or her appointed victim.

Prince Potemkin was delighted with his beautiful plot, which seemed almost too good to be true, and for a time he entertained ambitious dreams; he desired to take the place of General Count Loris-Melikoff, President of the Executive Commission, and he determined to hang all the political prisoners, guilty or not guilty.

Then the prince cross-questioned the *valet* Jabloffski about the plot, and the answers all proved satisfactory. Jabloffski had made the acquaintance of several members of this blood-thirsty gang, and had even taken the Nihilists' oath, that he might get to the bottom of this deep scheme.

The fact of his having a Nihilist about his person startled the prince at first; but Jabloffski, the *valet*, explained that he had only done this for his Highness Master's sake.

There were some little difficulties in the way

of the execution of the simple scheme which Jabloffski had first proposed, for he wished his Highness Master to give notice to Count Peter Schuvaloff that he was engaged in unravelling a Nihilist plot, and upon the same evening to be slightly wounded by Jabloffski. Every one would of course think that this was done by the Nihilists, and suspicion would be raised that there were Nihilists high in office in the Third Section, since their party became so quickly aware of all that passed in that division of the Imperial service.

Prince Potemkin would then tell his tale; and he would show, plausibly enough, how much sharper he had been, than all the members of the Third Section, in employing Jabloffski to become a Nihilist. Finally, the prince would receive a high office from the Czar, and Jabloffski a post in the police.

The prince wished to excuse himself from being wounded; for he feared that the affair would, through some accident, terminate fatally, if in the particular street which his *valet* mentioned,

he were to receive a scratch, or were he even to allow Jabloffski to run a sword against a cuirass which he proposed to wear under his coat upon this occasion. The street selected by Jabloffski was the one always present to him in those horrible visions which so often followed his most brilliant orgies; and when it was mentioned, his hands shook with terror, and he looked as if he were about to have another attack.

Though Jabloffski informed him that if he were not wounded by the Nihilists, he would never become the hero of the hour, he persistently refused to purchase honour at such a price. So the little plot was modified.

A Revolutionary Congress was to be held, the *valet* said, at Alexandroff's rooms; but the day, in consequence of a precaution which the Nihilists always took, would not be appointed till all was ready. Jabloffski was to attend this congress, and the prince was to come with a body of police to surprise them.

This scheme was more in accordance with the
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prince's ideas of the fitness of things in general, and more suitable to his courage in particular. His Highness even made a suggestion: Lertoffski and some other persons whom he suspected of being the cause of his disgrace at Court, might be implicated in the plot.

Jabloffski willingly consented to this business-like proposal; and he went as far as to say that a few Court personages amongst the conspirators would add to the notoriety, which they would be certain to obtain.

Everything was done with the greatest caution; and Jabloffski took letters, which Prince Potemkin had received from the great men to be implicated, to a lodging which he had taken to obviate the necessity of his forging the hand-writing of the letters and the signatures in the Potemkin Palace.

Finally, it was necessary that the prince should visit the rooms of his *valet*, to see the letters in which Lertoffski and others promised their assistance to the revolutionary committee.

Prince Potemkin set out with a light heart;

for all was going well with him ; and his patience would soon be rewarded. He was about to destroy Alexandroff, Lertoffski, and all those against whom he felt any particular spite ; and his desire to destroy was so keen, that he would not have exchanged his revenge for the prettiest woman in St. Petersburg.

Jabloffski's apartments were soon reached.

They went upstairs together ; but the prince was the first to enter. He passed through an ante-chamber to the sitting-room, the window of which looked upon another street than that by which he had entered with his *valet*.

For a moment, he glanced out at the street ; then he shrank back ; for it was the scene of the murder which had been enacted before his eyes, over and over again.

He gasped for breath.

"Do you see her?" Jabloffski asked in a hollow tone.

Prince Potemkin turned round. He could scarcely stand, and his eyes had much the appear-

ance which they presented during his delirious attacks.

"Who?" he managed to gasp, after a while, supporting himself by holding the table with both his hands.

Jabloffski poured him out a glass of brandy; and the prince drained it at a draught. Then he tried to refill it, but was unable; and Jabloffski did him this good office.

"It was Zillah, Princess Potemkin," Jabloffski then said, making it seem as though his words came from a distance.

"Who! Who!"

Jabloffski repeated the name: "Zillah!"

"Ah yes! yes!" said the wretch, half-drunk with the brandy he had taken. "She died out there. She died out there!"

"You killed her," Jabloffski continued. The prince turned round and saw his *valet* speaking. He had discovered whence the sound was proceeding; it was only Jabloffski.

"No! No! What does that matter to you?"

Don't be a fool. You startled me. It's coming on. I ought to be at home. Come away. Don't you see it? It's coming on. You had better put me to bed. There it is again, don't you see it! There she is, and he's killing her."

"What! Did you not kill her?"

"I! No. I am not a fool." Prince Potemkin said this, with a half-drunken, half-idiotic laugh. "Do you think I would kill her myself? Have you never heard of the mines of Nertchinsk? I would not risk that myself. I am not a fool. She was a fool, or she might be alive now, and as good as a princess. Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed.

"Who killed her?" Jabloffski asked again.

"Why! my man, of course," the prince said, giving his companion a knowing look.

"Is the man alive?" Jabloffski asked.

"No, no!" Prince Potemkin answered, trying to steady himself with one hand that he might give the other, as a sign of amity, to his servant.

"Dead men tell no tales," he continued, when he had failed in this attempt. "But his end was

terrible. We were travelling together just after, you know. It was winter. We were passing through the forest-land. There were wolves. We were nearly caught. He was sitting in front. He had to go. I let him fall off, and the wolves devoured him alive."

"Well, he deserved it," Jabloffski remarked, taking up an iron bar, such as they often use for breaking ice on the Neva. "Still it was a horrible death."

"He served his purpose," the prince said with a grin, helping himself to more brandy, and this time managing to do so without help.

"Eh! and now you want me to serve my purpose, do you not, Highness Master?"

Jabloffski's face was ghastly pale, yet he managed to sneer.

"No, no," the prince answered, sipping the brandy. "I am a man of honour. I never tell falsehoods. You may believe all I say. I tell you, you shall get your reward, and so it is true. I am speaking the truth, and I promise you your

place on my word of honour as a nobleman. *Noblesse oblige*. We never play dirty tricks. Falsehoods and mean actions are useless when one has good intentions. Let us drink and drown the devil."

"What is true is true; you never deceive any one," Jabloffski answered.

"No; I am a nobleman, you know, and *noblesse oblige*. I do not even try to deceive."

"Will you take another look out of the window? There is a young girl there, very pretty, slight figure, fair hair; would you like to look?"

Prince Potemkin began to shake again; and he turned his back to the window. Jabloffski closed the shutters and then lighted a lamp.

"Did you ever say a prayer, Highness Master?" Jabloffski then asked.

"Ah! yes, many a time, after one of those accursed attacks. I had a touch just now. You know what I say then; you've heard me at it before. Don't you think we had better go home

now? I ought to be in bed, for I feel very bad. The fiends seem coming after me. I'm afraid I'm going to have them again."

"Don't you think you had better say a prayer?" Jabloffski helped himself to a little brandy as he said this. He seemed to need it, too, for his hand was very shaky.

Prince Potemkin began to say one of the prayers of the Greek Church in a mocking tone. He still remembered it; it seemed a little joke to him, and he appeared to be amusing himself.

"You seem to enjoy it," Jabloffski remarked.

"Well, if one says a prayer one's self, one cheats the priest," the prince answered,

"Do you know what day this is?" Jabloffski asked.

"No."

"It is the anniversary of Zillah, the late Princess Potemkin's death. She was murdered, you know, after you had sentenced her lover to Siberia for life because he insulted you when he thought you wished to make her your mistress

and not your wife. When he was condemned she went to him in prison, begged him to forgive her for being unfaithful to him, told him that she was your legal wife, and promised to use her interest to obtain a pardon for him: but that night she was murdered."

"Why do you tell me all this?" the prince asked, as angrily as he dared in such a place.

"Because you will die on the anniversary of her death." As Jabloffski spoke, he raised the iron bar which he held in his hand; and the prince, seeing this, started to blow out the lamp, gasping out as he moved along:—"Have mercy upon me!"

Jabloffski overtook him before he reached the lamp, and struck him on the head with the iron bar. For a few seconds the prince struggled on the ground with Jabloffski; then he lay still, for his head had been shattered by the blows.

"You murdered her or caused her to be murdered," Jabloffski said, looking savagely at his victim, lying dead; and his face was ghastly pale.

"Some one," he muttered to himself, as he was washing his hands in the next room, "must avenge such deeds as those of that brute; but such a service is too vile even for the hangman."

He had loved Zillah once, whom Prince Potemkin had married and then murdered, because she wished him to acknowledge her as his wife. The murdered woman was Jabloffski's first and only love, and shortly after her death he was sent to Siberia. There he remained as a convict for twenty-five years, at the expiration of which time, as he had behaved himself well, and was neither a political offender nor a murderer, he was allowed to return to Russia.

At St. Petersburg, he learned that the princess, Zillah Potemkin, whom he had loved so fondly, had been murdered, and that the Nihilists suspected her husband of this crime.

Then Jabloffski became a Nihilist. He wished to do away with all the agents of tyranny, which had caused him to suffer so much misery; and it was his desire above all things, to avenge the

death of the woman whose image he had carried in his heart, and whom he had longed to see again during the long absence of five-and-twenty years. For a time, he played the spy upon the prince; then, because in that way alone could justice be meted out, he exacted a life for a life.

Twenty-five years of Siberian exile may have hardened his heart; and there are many of us who cannot forgive a minor trespass. The act which he committed was contrary to the laws of God and of man; but we are neither called upon to judge, nor to condemn.

Prince Potemkin was considered by the high functionaries of the Court, a much more important personage after his death, than he had ever been during his infamous life; and the Czar sent a message to Vera Michailovna, assuring her of the Imperial compassion, which was equivalent to an order that she would wear a widow's mourning for the deceased.

Vera was much shocked, though she could not grieve for his death. It recalled old memories to

her mind, and made her think of what might have been, if she could have lived her life over again.

Though she could not feel sorry for his death, still she did pity him, because he was called so suddenly from a life of infamy, to render an account of his talents unto his Maker. He was her husband, though he was so vile, and to her God she offered up some prayers in his behalf.

The manner of his death was so awful, that it made her think of him with pity, instead of with hate. For a week, they did not find him; and then he was so changed, that she could not bear to look upon his face.

In his pocket they found a revolver, which he had not possessed sufficient presence of mind to fire. Had he done so, the report would have given an alarm. The noise of the struggle did not startle any one; Jabloffski had been nailing up some boxes the night before, and no one had taken any notice, even of that. A large reward was offered for the apprehension of the murderer; but he was never brought before any earthly judge

to answer an accusation charging him with this crime ; and the police, as they could not find him, informed the public that he must have committed suicide.

The words Nihilist and assassin now became synonymous in the minds of those rich princes and "high nobilities" of St. Petersburg who could gain nothing by any change in the social condition of the country ; and they and the Czar organised a war of extermination against all those liberal politicians who had any other programme than that of the union of the Slavs under a Romanoff.

Arrests were made. Those who were poor and wretched, who had some cause of complaint against the Government, or who could not give, what the police considered, a proper account of themselves, were thrown into prison. It behoved the superior officers of the police to be active in making arrests, if they desired to retain their positions ; and the subordinates followed the example of their officers. Officers and men made

raids on the homes of the helpless, and if they could find no other victims, they contented themselves with the unfortunate Jews, against whom the popes had inflamed the minds of the people.

The Governors-General of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Kharkoff, Kieff, and Warsaw, were authorised to remove from their districts all undesirable persons; to subject civilians to martial law; to arrest any person of whatever rank at will; to suppress newspapers and periodicals; and to adopt such measures as might seem to them necessary for the maintenance of public order. Russia was soon in a state of siege; and courts-martial were appointed.

The first batch of prisoners tried at Kieff included the daughter of a privy councillor, three noblemen, and a Prussian citizen. Resistance to the searches of the police became a capital offence; to conspire against autocracy, one punishable with penal servitude in the mines of Siberia; and teaching the poor and ignorant, with such sentence

as the judges should think fit for those guilty of so abominable a crime.

Six hundred political prisoners were despatched from Odessa, in the ship Nizhni-Novgorod, for the island of Saghalien, near Japan, where they were to serve their terms of punishment. Their sufferings were terrible. Battered down under the hatches, deprived of a proper supply of food or water, one by one they died as the ship passed through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea. A similar fate befell those sentenced to the mines, or simple exile in Eastern Siberia. They were allowed to perish, on the way, of hunger, thirst, or cold ; and it was a more cruel death than hanging, even if the executioner did allow the rope to break once or twice.

Many of the socialist circles had hitherto only insisted upon their right to teach the artisan and peasant classes. But now their schools were closed by the orders of the police, all the teachers were suspected of inculcating revolutionary doctrines, and a large number of them were thrown

into prison upon so vague a charge, that the commissioners could have found every poor man and woman guilty of it, without running any risk of being condemned as unjust judges by the Crown, or by the Imperial Chancellor who now boasted more than ever of his desire to leave Russia as he had found her, a country of serfs, living under the despotism of an autocrat.

The editors of the chief newspapers of St. Petersburg, who had become outspoken in their demands for liberal reforms were summoned before the recently appointed Minister of the Interior, General Loris-Melikoff, who informed them that essays and paragraphs written on the subject of a Constitution for Russia were highly displeasing to the Czar and his Court, and that no further discussions on the subject would be allowed to appear in print.

The Liberals, Socialists, and Nihilists now united in demanding the dismissal of the governors appointed with arbitrary power, and the annulment of the measures taken by them; the

abolition of special tribunals for political offences, and an amnesty to those persons condemned by them ; guarantees against imprisonment without trial ; freedom for the press ; and the right of holding public meetings.

The representatives of the parties who were hostile to despotism then met in a secret congress, to discuss the ways in which it was possible for them to resist the researches of the police, and to prevent themselves becoming the victims of the tribunals which condemned every man and woman, suspected of entertaining liberal opinions. Some of the Nihilists wished to carry on a war with the Government, which was murdering them ; and these terrorists believed that the authorities would only be persuaded to cease their butchery through fear. Others desired to send emissaries through the provinces, who, disguised as hawkers, could teach the peasants that the real power would soon be in their hands, if they would only organize themselves and be ready to act for their country ; and these members of the revolutionary

party wished to select men of ability to represent them in the army and navy, in the Church, in the official hierarchy, at the Bar, and in every trade, who, when they had gained the confidence of their fellows, would be able to explain that it was the duty of every Russian to throw off the yoke of the Romanoffs, and to appoint officers, willing and able to serve the Russian Republic.

Sophy Peroffskaya did her best to avoid an open rupture between those eager to avenge themselves upon the despot for his cruelties, and those who still wished to abstain from violence whilst preaching the gospel of the revolution ; but without the assistance of the Government she might not have been able to effect her purpose. The severity against the Nihilists was increased, whilst they were in congress : sixteen were executed in one day ; hundreds were sent to the Siberian mines ; and one man, afraid of showing weakness before his judges, burnt himself to death in his cell. Then the Nihilists declared war.

A duel, which can only end with the destruc-

tion of one of the combatants, then commenced between the Government and Nihilism. An official, more brutal than his fellows, was assassinated ; and a Nihilist, more daring or unfortunate than his companions, was hanged or otherwise judicially murdered : but there were others ready to fill the positions of the officials and of the Nihilists who were slain.

War is always an evil ; but if it be in any case justifiable, it is so when the people rise against their oppressors.

The Nihilists whom the Government could not overawe by the gallows, or by death inflicted in a more terrible way on the road to Siberia, were chiefly Jews, Poles, and Russian students and artisans ; but there were also some *moujiks* who had come to the towns for work, and some men who, having entered the army or navy to win over their companions, were also actively engaged in the campaign against absolute despotism.

The Jews in Russia are ill-treated and despised ;

they are refused permission to travel, or to live in certain towns; and at night they are forced, like unclean beasts, to creep back to their miserable *ghettos*.

The students, driven from the schools and universities through poverty or some trifling offence against discipline; the schoolmasters, who are suspected upon account of their calling; the underpaid minor public officials, who must either be dishonest or allow their families to die of hunger; and the lieutenants in the army and navy, whose hopes are disappointed in consequence of the higher hereditary nobles receiving the promotion to which they consider their longer service entitles them: all these also require a change, and become in time the agents of those Nihilists who wish to establish a new republic.

The war of the revolution began, and was bitterly contested upon each side. The Government executed the Nihilists in batches; and the Nihilists answered by attempts upon the life of the emperor.

The Autocrat of all the Russias could not be impeached by a citizen or by a group of citizens ; he could not be proceeded against by law, for it was, and is, the very foundation of Russian law that the Czar can do no wrong. Therefore, when in the past the nobles have felt particularly aggrieved by the tyranny of their despot, they have always assassinated him, and placed a successor upon his throne. The people now occupied the position which had belonged to the nobles ; and to put an end to despotism and tyranny they wished to remove the alien family of the Romanoffs from the Russian throne and country.

In a regular war, hundreds are slain in a petty battle, and the reading public are not shocked, for it is waiting for a description of the slaughter of tens of thousands ; but here the Republicans only wished to overcome a single family, and the world, which the rich rule, was shocked, because the Romanoffs are one of those few families who rule millions by the sword.

The Nihilists have a hatred of war ; it is one

of the evils which they would destroy, wishing, as they do, reason, and not brute force, to reign. Still, life, even to them, was precious ; and they fought for self-preservation, for liberty and freedom.





CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR THE PEOPLE?

BLOODSHED in a revolutionary war causes similar misery and affliction to that which tyrants bring about, when, in their own petty quarrels, they throw armies upon the field of battle, to maim, to slaughter, and to die. Mothers weep, widows mourn, and children are fatherless, even when the cause is a holy one.

The Czar of Russia was dead, but another had ascended the throne. Men who hated despots and despotism had freed the world of a tyrant; but another, and a worse, had taken his place. The bloodshed had been useless; and devoted men and women should remember that rebellion

is always a crime, except when success changes it to the assertion of the will of the People.

Sophy Peroffskaya and her companions expiated, on the gallows, their crime of striking before the nation was ready for a change. Those who would condemn them should remember that there was no tribunal upon earth to decide the dispute between the Czar and the Nihilists; and that the Czar caused all Russian citizens discontented with his government to be either hanged or exported to Siberia.

Dead! The flatterers of the Court called upon mankind to forget the evil he had done, and to remember only the good.

He freed fifty million serfs—that those who had formerly worked for the nobles might then slave for him. He protected these emancipated serfs from the exactions of the nobles—for the nobility was the only power which he had then to fear, and its strength was his own weakness. Though an autocrat, and above all law, he yet paid his private debts—that he might always be

able to borrow without difficulty when he wanted money suddenly for purposes of immorality. He conducted a holy war against the Turks—for his own honour and glory, and to turn the thoughts of the Russians from internal reforms. And when, after the death of the empress, he married his mistress and the mother of his children, he was true to her—being then afraid that every stranger wished to poison him.

Brigands with such virtues may perhaps also be found.

“Not by what he failed to do, but by what he did, should Alexander II. be judged,” says his panegyrist.

There was once upon a time a man to whom one thousand talents of gold were entrusted; one he invested well, one he buried under the ground, and nine hundred and ninety-eight he dissipated in evil living. By the one well-invested, shall you judge of the use he made of his talents!

“The supreme autocrat over one-sixth of the earth,” continues his panegyrist, “with armies

and prisons at his sole command, with generals and judges of his sole and undisputed creation, is not a man to be measured by the rules we apply to ourselves."

If a hungry man takes bread from a rich man for his starving wife and child, he is a thief, and to be punished as one; but if the Czar takes all the poor emancipated serfs possess, as taxation, this is his right, and no more disputable than that of any other rich man to his possessions. For, says the panegyrist, "The Government of Russia, such as it is, is an hereditary institution, a species of property belonging to the Romanoffs."

Maxim Tsiepherkin was a species of property belonging to the Romanoffs; but he worked away at the task of healing the poor who were sick, which he considered the Creator had appointed him to do. The Czar could cause the physician to be arrested, sent to Siberia, or have him hanged; but whilst he lived, Maxim would not cease to perform what he considered his duty.

The physician of the poor did not own a foot

of land in the world ; he had no shelter in which he could hide his head from the police of the autocrat's sole and undisputed creation ; and day by day he prayed for his daily bread, having laid up for himself no treasure upon earth.

Time had taught little Zillah to love him as he deserved to be loved. She still urged him to take great care of himself ; but she did not ever ask him now to forego his task of assisting the poor and helpless, with such skill as he possessed, and with such words of comfort as his tongue could utter.

Love was the doctrine which poor, spurned Maxim Tsiepherkin preached to his fellow-outcasts from the world of luxury and extravagance. A wide-spread human love could do, he said, more for mankind than half the world in arms ; and Maxim had refused to raise a weapon, even against the despot and his myrmidons.

He was only Maxim Tsiepherkin, a mere cipher, whom the world despised as a fool and an idealist ; and medical men who had not half his

skill, rolled by in their carriages, and the mud from the wheels splashed him walking to the bedsides of those who could pay no fee.

He never prescribed gold and syrup of oranges for a patient, with instructions to the chymist to strain the mixture, so that the gold might do again, and that the doctor and chymist might share this illegitimate profit ; he even raised his voice against such practices, in a manner quite contrary to the etiquette of the profession.

In the slums, and in the *ghettos* of the Jews, the poor, deprived of the necessities of life, tossed about on the floors in fever ; and he attended, and fed them, purchasing nourishment and medicines for them, with the money which Zillah gained by her profession. He was quite contented with his task, and was foolish enough to think his occupation as honourable as that of a Court Physician.

So he laboured on, and he learned to love this outcast humanity for which he laboured, being himself despised by the favoured of Mammon.

Little Zillah had forgotten all about Alexan-

droff, his Grecian profile, his handsome face, and his winning manner ; and she did not believe that there could be such another husband in the world, as Maxim Tsiepherkin.

She was talking to him one evening after her return from the theatre ; he had passed a long day in labour and was much fatigued. He drew her to him and kissed her fondly ; for he loved her, not passionately, but with such hallowed love as a mother may feel for a child. She was his child too, in much ; for when he met her first, she was only a mass of living protoplasm ; and he had taught her how to develop herself, and she had become a noble woman.

“ Maxim,” she said, “ I have a great desire to reform the stage. Some, indeed, think that it is not worth reforming, that it would be better to do away with it ; but I consider that it might well be retained to teach a good lesson. I should like to have a company in which all the women would be pure, and all the men honest ; that we might play pieces affording a moral, and not an immoral,

example. Still I suppose it can never be, Maxim?"

"It is a wish, Zillah pet, that is worthy of you," he answered. "You should try, for a good work attempted is never time lost; and if you could not accomplish all, still something might be done. A good example set, a kindly word of encouragement spoken, a hand held out to help vice out of the mire, by one who would cast no stone at the woman rescued; all these acts might be productive of good."

"Oh! you do not know how vile they are. Some of them seem to think that because they act upon the stage, they should be destitute of all virtue and modesty; and vice, if only glaring enough, is employed as an advertisement. So what could I do all alone?"

"Zillah pet," he answered, "it was only a tallow candle that set fire to the whole city of Moscow."

"Maxim," she said, "I will try; but I am a woman, and weak; and there is so much vice

and misery that each of us can do so little to overcome it."

"Because one alone can do so little, and there is so much to be done, it behoves each of us, the more, to do his best; for if every capable person were to labour for the poor, how much less human suffering there would be in the world."

"If I could only be like you!" Zillah said; she had learned to think of him as her ideal.

"We should not be so well off, little one, if we were all alike. Without your help, Zillah pet, without your voice, I could do nothing; for my patients would all die of starvation. Then you are also my comforter; and I am grateful for that."

"And you need comforting;" she said, looking up with a smile on her face, "for you look tired and weary. You must go and rest; it is time, and you need it."

He pressed a kiss upon her forehead. He loved her dearly; and it was well for him that he had found this little creature to love and care

for him, as his body was weak, and he would often labour far beyond his strength.

They parted for the night ; and she, when alone, said a prayer for Maxim, her husband, who was more to her now than all the world beside. To him, she knew, she owed her preservation from many temptations and from many dangers ; and her heart was overflowing with gratitude.

Maxim was too weary and tired to sleep ; and he thought how evil the world was, and how little a man can accomplish in a lifetime.

He was, in truth, only a husbandman, engaged in rooting up poppies and tares, which were springing up too luxuriously amongst the growing corn ; and he wished to destroy the evil, that the good might flourish.

This night, desponding, it seemed to him that he had spared himself too much. Zillah had often begged him to take greater care of himself ; and he had paid some little attention to her entreaties, fearing that, if he were called away,

there would be no one to care for his poor patients, who suffered from hunger and disease.

There had been times of despondency, when he had been inclined to doubt all truth; but this night he did not doubt. On the contrary, everything seemed clearer to him than it had ever been before. It was his duty to labour, without sparing himself, until his task should be accomplished; then another, or others, would be appointed to fill his place. As for himself, he had little doubt or fear. His Master had said, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

This last thought was cheering; and being very tired, he slumbered upon his hard couch without undressing.

There was a knock at the door.

Maxim heard it. He listened a moment; and when it was repeated, he rose at once to open the door.

Two policemen entered.

"We want *you*," one of them said.

"Please let me pack up a few of my things,"

Maxim said quietly. He was not at all surprised ; he had sometimes wondered why the police had left him alone so long.

"It is not necessary," one of them observed, looking significantly at his companion.

"Oh, no!" said the other, half-smiling. "You will never require them where you are going."

Maxim Tsiepherkin understood. In the morning, he would be either hanged or shot.

"Let me say farewell to my wife," he begged.

"It will be of no use, and we have no time to wait," the policeman who had almost treated the matter as a joke, answered. Then, noticing that Maxim's face now became troubled for the first time, he continued :—"We had better be going, for the house is full of Nihilists."

"Let the poor wretch stop for a moment," said the other policeman.

"Well, well, if we do, you must take the responsibility," the other answered.

"Very well, be it so. You must be quick

though," said the man, turning to Maxim Tsiepherkin.

Maxim knocked at the door of Zillah's room.

"The house is full of Nihilists," repeated the policeman who wished to be off.

"Bah!" exclaimed the man who had given Maxim the permission he so eagerly desired. "Are we not armed?" As he asked this question, he took his revolver from his belt, and held it in his hand; and his companion followed his example.

Just then, Zillah, aroused by the sound of the voices, and by Maxim's knocking, entered the room.

"Is that you, Maxim?" she asked. "Are you going out again to a patient? Shall I come with you?" Then, when her eyes became more accustomed to the light, she saw the policemen with revolvers in their hands, and she gave a little scream.

"Yes, Zillah pet," he answered, "it is I; and I am going on a long journey. You cannot accompany me, darling; but we shall meet again

some day." His eyes, which had been cast down, now looked upwards; and she understood that the parting would be for all time. Only their souls would meet in Heaven.

"Oh! my God, my God!" she cried, "can such things be?"

She screamed louder this time, and her screams attracted the notice of those in the rooms above, which Maxim Tsiepherkin was using as an hospital. The patients who could walk armed themselves, and came to the room in which Zillah and Maxim were saying adieu to one another, in the presence of the policemen.

"The first man who enters will be shot down!" said the policeman who had refused to allow Maxim to take a last farewell of his companion upon earth.

"We are not afraid," answered a voice without.

"We are weak, Maxim Tsiepherkin," said another, "but we are well armed, and there are ten of us. You need not fear, for we are not afraid, and we will set you free."

"We all owe our lives to you, Maxim Tsiepherkin, and we will give them back to you, if necessary," said a third.

"My good friends," answered Maxim, "you are very kind, but this man on my right gave me permission to say good-bye to Zillah; otherwise, by this time we should all be gone. It was kind of him, and he must not suffer for his kindness. Put up your weapons; we shall want to pass. Good-bye. You had better go upstairs again, for your own sakes."

"Good-bye, darling," he continued, turning to Zillah. "When I am gone, you will do all you can to help those I cared for. Try also to effect that of which we spoke last night, and to do all the good you can in this world, before you come to me in the next.

She threw her arms around his neck; and it seemed to her that she had strength to hold him there for ever, and that no one could tear him away.

"No matter," said one of the men outside,

“we will shoot the other policeman, and you can escape.”

A war was being waged between Nihilism and Despotism, and human life was but little valued on either side.

“You will hurt neither of these men ; and you will let us pass,” Maxim said, when Zillah would allow him to speak.

“Oh ! you will not go when they can save you ! ” Zillah exclaimed, entreating him to stay.

“Yes,” he answered, “I must go. There shall be no blood shed for my sake. I am only Tsiepherkin, a mere cipher.”

“No, no, no ! ” Zillah exclaimed. “If men were all like you, then there would be some hope left in the world.”

Then speaking louder, she said to those outside :—

“You will save him, will you not, my friends, in spite of himself ? It is I, Zillah his wife, who tell you to do this.”

Maxim kissed her.

Then, speaking to the others who had called to her and had promised to save him, even against his own wish, he said:—

“No, no! there shall be no blood shed to save me. I am only Tsiepherkin, and I will not risk your lives . . .”

“Our lives are of no importance,” they called to him. “We will save you.”

“No, no!”—Then to Zillah, kissing her, he whispered, “Adieu.”—“If you shoot at the semen, I will stand in front of them, and your shots shall pierce my heart.”

Giving them no time to recover from the effect of his words, he made a sign to the policeman who had done him the kindly service, and they started. The other policeman, who had wished to prevent him seeing Zillah, followed, quaking with fear. This fellow would have scanned the faces of the Nihilists in the passage, as well as the light would have enabled him to do so, but he was afraid they might fire at him going down the stairs, if they suspected that he would be

able to identify them ; for it was now a capital offence, to resist the police in the execution of their duty.

When Maxim Tsiepherkin had left the room, Zillah fainted ; but she was not long in recovering her presence of mind, and she then determined to go to the palace to sue to the young Czar for mercy.

Still she had forgotten : actresses are not admitted to the palaces of the Romanoffs, if they be true women, and pure.

Turned away from the palace, Zillah thought of Lertoffski. She went to his house, and after some delay, she was admitted, and allowed to see the privy councillor.

“ Ah ! ” he said, “ what a pretty creature the gipsy girl has grown to be ! Who would think that this is you ? And so you have come to comfort me in my old age ! ”

She told him the object of her coming.

“ So Tsiepherkin has got into trouble at last, has he ? and now he sends his pretty wife to me

to beg him off, eh?" the old statesman inquired with a chuckle. "Well, well, what a strange world it is! So you are Madame Tsiepherkin, are you? Well, never mind that; it was only a youthful folly, which the young widow will soon forget. They have to make quick work of them now, or gaol-fever carries them off, and the people lose the lesson which a public execution teaches them. The poor commissioners had to sit up all last night, trying a batch of some two hundred prisoners who would not plead guilty. Some will be hanged this morning, and there is soon to be a general gaol-delivery. Siberia must be becoming quite a pleasant field for the emigration of the Nihilists. Why, if these gentlemen set out from here at the rate they do now, in a few thousands of years they will be acquiring a land-hunger of their own, and may provide half the world with corn."

Zillah was weeping. Whilst he had been taunting her thus, she had been saying a prayer for Maxim. Her last hope of saving her husband

was almost spent ; there was no one else on earth who would save him from an ignominious and cruel death ; and she prayed to Heaven, and then again to Lertoffski.

“ Oh ! ” she exclaimed, falling down upon her knees before him, “ have mercy upon me, and save him ! ”

“ Tsiepherkin ! ” he exclaimed with a little laugh, “ Tsiepherkin ! What does it matter ? He is no one. As to you, you are a beautiful woman ; and I admire you. I am not angry with you, though you did go away in a temper the last time you came here ; and my dutiful daughter has not visited me since. She says I insulted her friend ; and being a princess, she gives herself airs. But never mind that ; you shall be as grand as she is, and as rich. Oh ! I know you are not to be lightly won, but you shall be my wife. The late Czar married in his old age ; so why should not I follow his example ? What a pretty nurse I shall have ! I had a pretty nurse about sixty years ago. My mother was a celebrated beauty,

but she died . . . when she was about my age."

As he said this, he spoke more seriously; he no longer thought of death as a joke. Still he tried to laugh it off, though he felt very uncomfortable.

"I never expected to have such another nurse in my old age."

In order to show her that he was quite composed, he grinned like an imbecile.

"Spare my husband!" she cried, "for your dead mother's sake."

"Ah!" he answered, "she never spared any one. But there she is." As he spoke, he pointed to a picture on the wall. "Like your mother, she rose from being a mere nobody."

"You knew my mother then! Would you spare me for her sake?"

"I would marry you for her sake."

"I am married already," she said, weeping.

"You may wait till Tsiepherkin has crossed the Ural mountains, or" Zillah's sobs

prevented his adding, "until the gallows have done their work."

In either case she would be free; for the law gave the wife of a Siberian exile a divorce.

"Spare him, spare him!" she prayed, kneeling before the old man.

"Yes, I will," he said; "he shall live in Siberia, if you will promise to be my wife then."

"No, no," she answered, still pleading to him. "I must be his, in life and in death."

"Bah!" exclaimed the privy councillor. "You women all wish to be widows."

"No, no, not that!" she cried. "Spare him for God's sake."

"What!" he exclaimed. "Do you Nihilists believe in . . . in . . . in all that?"

"Maxim believes, and I believe," she answered. "But some think that if there were a merciful God, he would not put all the power in the hands of"

She would have said, "in the hands of bad

men," but she checked herself in time. Still he understood.

"If you would preach to me 'the doctrine of love,'" he said, "I think I should be convinced." He was speaking in mockery, but his face was so serious that Zillah thought him sincere.

"I would do my best to convince you, if you would save Maxim," she answered.

"And if not? Should we not forgive one another our trespasses . . . "

"Oh!" she groaned, "I could not do that. It is only a man like Maxim who could forgive the one who had refused to save his dearest friend. I am not good, as Maxim is; and I love him so much that I could not help hating you, if you would not even stretch out your hand to save him."

"And if his life be spared, you will come to me again. I am an old man now, I cannot go to the theatre as I did; yet I like a song, and it is all so dull here."

"Yes," she answered, "I will come, and I will

bring your daughter. As to the words which you spoke to me before, they shall be as if unspoken."

"But I am no one now," he said, sighing. "I am of no use, and they have placed me on the retired list."

"You can go to the Czar," she said, "and Heaven will reward you."

"'The Czar is near, and Heaven afar off.'" He sarcastically repeated the proverb which the Greek Church had taught the Russian people, in order to inculcate a feeling of servile obedience to the head of the Church upon earth.

Lertoffski had partaken of the Sacrament every year regularly, as the law prescribed ; but he had only regarded religion as the protector of the rights of kings, nobles, and property-holders in general. For this reason, he deemed it useful ; whilst many of the Nihilists wished to deny it, because it was used as a defence for despotism.

"I will help you if I can," he said, after a long pause, "but you had better go now. I must have

assistance, for I am an invalid, and unable to get along alone."

She offered to help him, but he said his man would be quicker, and time was precious. She summoned his attendant; and taking her leave of him, she said:—

"May Heaven help and reward you."

"Amen!" responded the old man; and the word came from his heart, in reply to a holy wish, for the first time.

Zillah went to the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, where the Nihilists were imprisoned; but the authorities would not allow her to see Maxim Tsiepherkin, nor could she learn what his fate was to be. They only told her that some executions would take place that day; in an hour or two, perhaps; but they could not say when, with any certainty.

She felt as if her heart would break. If he were to die, then she would die; for she could not live without him.

Then she thought of the duties which he had

imposed upon her, and of the good which she might do in his stead. This was not much ; still she would do it, for his sake.

She longed to see him again, to press him to her heart ; but though Lertoffski had promised to aid her, she had little hope of ever again meeting Maxim in this life.

There were many others also waiting outside the prison walls to see the men, and, perhaps, women also, going to their doom ; and some came, like herself, hoping, yet fearing, to see a friend, a brother, a father, or a husband, for the last time upon earth.

She had been there two hours, when the gates of the fortress opened, and a sad cavalcade issued forth. First came a band, which was playing a loud and lively piece, to drown the voices of the condemned, should they try to address the people ; then a troop of horse ; then a cart draped in black, upon which eight prisoners were seated, chained to one another and to it ; then another troop of horse brought up the rear.

The people standing near the gate gave vent to their feelings. Some cried, some shouted, some threw flowers, and many tried to get near the tumbrel, but were driven back by the cavalry at the point of the sword. No one amongst the crowd, a large part of which was composed of strangers to the prisoners, showed a sign of any other feeling than pity for these poor creatures, who had been condemned to death on the vague charge, "of conspiring together to spread the revolutionary ideas which caused the death of the late emperor."

There was a halt outside the prison. Zillah scanned the faces of the condemned, and her heart, though full of pity for them, rejoiced, because Maxim Tsiepherkin was not there.

Then some mounted gendarmes issued from the prison and proceeded to the head of the sad cavalcade. Another cart followed, and Zillah almost fainted.

Strapped to the iron bar, with his back to the horses, dressed in the coarse black robe and cap

worn only by criminals condemned to death, was Maxim Tsiepherkin.

For a moment she could not speak—she almost fell to the ground.

“Good God!” she gasped at length, “have you no mercy?”

Maxim saw her. She was ghastly pale; he, calm, and seemingly content to be a martyr for the cause he loved.

“Good-bye, Zillah,” he shouted. “Take care of my friends, and remember what we were speaking of last night.”

She could not hear his words, and in trying to approach the cart she was knocked down by one of the soldiers. There was an angry murmur amongst the crowd, and some shouted, “A rescue! A rescue!” Some of the condemned tried to make their words audible to their friends, and to prevent this, a troop of mounted gendarmes who were guarding the rear of the procession began to sing the national anthem:—

“Hurrah! Hurrah! God save the Czar!”

There was much hissing amongst the crowd, but the noise was too great for any concerted plan of attack to be arranged. A few men were shot down, others were taken prisoners, and many more were felled to the ground by blows with the but-ends of muskets or with swords; then the procession moved on.

Zillah lay upon the ground insensible, until a woman of the people raised her. "Are they gone?" were the first words she spoke. "Yes," answered the woman. "But was there any one amongst them a friend of yours, my little dove?"

"Oh! there was my husband. Shall I never, never see him more?"

"If you took a carriage," answered the woman, "you might see him hanged; but there is little comfort in that."

"O God, God," groaned Zillah, "can all this be true? Oh, spare him! spare him! At least have mercy upon him. Mercy! Mercy! Justice!" she began to shout, then to rave . . .

Finally she fainted, and fell down in the street.





CHAPTER IX.

DEATH : BEAUTIFUL, WISE, KIND DEATH.



AXIM TSIEPHERKIN, in the cart which was taking him, six other men, and a woman, to their deaths, spoke words which he thought might comfort his companions in misfortune. He told them of the world beyond the grave, where there is no misery or care ; and of One who had been condemned to die, and who had died, after devoting His life on earth to the service of the poor, the humble, and the oppressed.

They listened to him with attention ; for there was no hope for them, save in the world to come.

Such prayers as he knew, Maxim Tsiepherkin

repeated to them then ; and they prayed fervently.

Flowers were thrown into the cart ; and the demeanour of the crowd showed them that their deaths would be considered martyrdom, by those for whom they had spent their lives in working.

At the Simonoffski Plain, eight scaffolds had been erected ; and ten thousand infantry guarded the square in which the gallows stood. When the condemned reached the place of execution, the drums and fifes ceased playing ; there was a solemn silence ; even those who had come out of mere curiosity to witness a horrible spectacle, could observe that the poor pinioned prisoners were no foul felons. Then the condemned were relieved of their chains ; and when this was done they were hurried from the carts, their black caps were removed by an assistant executioner, and an officer read the sentence of death.

The condemned embraced one another for the last time, and Maxim Tsiepherkin bade them hope to meet again, in a world, free from sorrow and suffering.

They looked up at the gallows, of which there were only eight ; and each of them was eager to be one of the first to die, for they were all loath to witness the dying struggles of their friends. They had all been firm and brave until this last moment ; then the woman and some of the men pleaded with their companions, that they might be the first victims of the law.

The Nihilists are generally men chosen upon account of their powers of endurance ; but these men were not all terrorists ; some of them were simple citizens who had become republicans, through their hatred of despotism.

They settled the matter amongst themselves ; but the commanding officer ordered them back into line, took the eight who had been in the first cart, and handed them over singly to the executioner and his assistants. Those selected showed remarkable firmness and resignation ; whilst those condemned to witness their sufferings, showed some signs of weakness ; and the woman fainted.

Eight priests in purple caps mounted the scaf-

folds, and each presented a Cross, which the condemned kissed, though not one of them would listen to the words of the priests. The heads of the eight standing under the beams were then covered ; the drums began to beat again, playing a merry tune ; the ropes were placed round the necks of those about to die ; each was assisted to ascend the steps of a small stool ; the ropes were tightly drawn round the supporting beams ; the stools were withdrawn, and the men left to die.

One of the ropes broke and the prisoner fell, bound and helpless, with a heavy thud to the ground. He stood up again unaided, and mounted the steps ; the rope was knotted, the stool withdrawn ; his body swung for a moment back to where it was before, under the beam ; then the knot gave way again, and he once more fell violently to the ground. He was still conscious, but unable to rise ; so he was carried by some of the soldiers ; but these men, whilst helping the executioner to knot the rope, let him fall again.

The poor, dying, human creature, was hoisted

into the air by the rope ; and the general in command, saying that he did not want to stay there all day, bade the hangman support himself by the legs of the dying man. Then the rope broke in a fresh place, and both fell upon the scaffold.

This time it seemed as if the work of despotism had been completed.

“Hound,” said the general to Maxim Tsiopherkin, who had been described in the sentence as a surgeon, “see if that beast is dead !”

One of the assistants loosened the rope which bound Maxim’s hands behind his back, and he found that the poor fellow was still breathing ; there was a rattle in his throat ; he gave a groan ; then Maxim leant all his weight upon his comrade’s neck, that he might cease to suffer.

No man would have hesitated more than Maxim Tsiopherkin to take the life of a fellow-creature ; but the horrible sight, the poor sufferer’s agony, together with the certainty that any few seconds of life left to him would be so full of agony as to deprive the brain of its power of praying, made

him, on the impulse of the moment, set the spirit of his comrade free.

When he saw what he had done, when he reflected for a moment, he was grieved, his head throbbed ; and then he remembered no more, for he fainted away.

He found himself in a cell in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, when he was again restored to consciousness ; he did not know how he had been brought there, and for a moment he could not remember anything ; then it all came back to him.

At first he waited, expecting every night to meet his fate the next morning ; but days passed, full of such mental anguish as few could imagine ; and the days became weeks, and the weeks became months.

Finally, Maxim Tsiepherkin learned that he was to set out for Siberia, whither Alexander III. was despatching thousands of those suspected of hostility to his despotic rule.

The band of exiles to which Maxim Tsiepherkin was attached suffered terribly from the cold ;

and the hunger of the wayfarers was not appeased by the small allowance of food provided for each. The poor peasants in the settled districts would often leave food for the prisoners at the halting stations ; but the greater part of this provision, so kindly given, was often taken by the soldiers, and that provided by the Government was scarcely fit for swine.

The prisoners generally passed the nights in sheds built for this purpose ; but these places were so overrun with vermin that sleep was almost impossible ; and they were more fortunate, when compelled to remain in the open air, though some would then die of cold, during the night. Perhaps those who never awoke from their slumbers were the most fortunate of all.

Fever broke out amongst the exiles ; the hospitals on the way were famed as slaughter-houses ; and to be left in one was certain death. The doctor first took from the dying man the few necessaries which the soldiers had allowed him to retain ; the director of the institution then pocketed

the sum allowed for burial; and the attendants had only the skeleton, which would fetch a very small sum for exportation.

Some years before, a medical man, more ingenious than the rest, had turned the flesh to account as manure; but he died of fever in his own hospital, and the people, who were superstitious, had declared that it was a judgment upon him; and he found no imitators.

Maxim Tsiepherkin was not at first allowed to aid those who fell sick by the way; but when the fever spread, the officers and soldiers, fearing the risk of contagion, allowed him to do what he could for the suffering, and caused him to be provided with supplies of the medicines for which he asked, at one of the towns outside which they halted.

The heat of the sun at midday, want of proper food, and disease, caused the poor men and women on the march to drop down one by one; and no blows could induce them to continue the journey on foot. The guard would not take them into the baggage-waggons for fear of infection, and besides,

the sick were too numerous; so the Cossacks pricked those who fell with their lances, to be sure that they were not malingering, and then left them on the plains to die.

The nights were still cold, but there was no shelter for them; for the news had spread that they were suffering from the plague, and an order had been given that they should not halt too close to any town or village.

Soon the disease seized upon some of the soldiers; and then the officers, fearing lest they should also be attacked, ordered the bodies of the dead to be burned every morning, when, horrible to relate, the bodies of the dying convicts were placed in the same flames with those of the dead.

The baggage-waggon were filled with dying soldiers, and when these would hold no more, the worn-out prisoners were forced to carry the others on blankets, until death relieved them of their burden, which it soon did, as the fever-stricken soldiers were exposed to the direct rays of the sun.

Maxim Tsiepherkin was allowed to do what he

could for the living, but the circumstances allowed little hope of recovery, when a man or woman was once taken ill. He did cure two officers and several soldiers ; but these were attacked by the malady in a much milder form, and they had been provided with more wholesome food.

For convicts, soldiers, and officers, it was a terrible journey ; and many an one listened to the earnest words of the physician, addressed to those whose spirits were speeding unto that bourn whence there can be no return to the sorrows and misery of life.

The officers promised Maxim Tsiepherkin that, if they escaped the contagion, they would reward him by obtaining permission for him to reside and practise in some large town, instead of his being forced to labour all his life in the quicksilver mines.

For his own sake, Maxim Tsiepherkin did not care whether he lived or died ; but it seemed to him that his life had been spared for some good purpose. If it had been the will of his Master, he would have been content to die.

Ekaterinburg was reached at last, where there was a proper hospital, in which the convicts were allowed to rest. Two-thirds of the exiles were dead, and there was not one of them in good health ; and Maxim Tsiepherkin was so thin and pale that, having passed so much time amongst the sick, it seemed a wonder that he should have escaped the disease.

Maxim Tsiepherkin was appointed an assistant at the hospital ; but he was the only convict allowed to remain at Ekaterinburg. The others went their way ; the political prisoners to the mines ; and the rest to the penal settlements outside the towns.

Some of these men were rude and brutal, and had been convicted of the worst crimes : but the majority were noble men—noble upon account of the nobility of their natures, not by the chances of birth—who had been exiled in consequence of their religious or political opinions ; and Maxim was sorry to part with those who had been his companions so long.

There were some, indeed, who had fought for the rations of the dying, and had refused to help those who, being overcome by fatigue and having no one to afford them any assistance, were left upon the plains to be wounded by the lances of the Cossack rear-guard, and then to die. But the soldiers and officers had shown the same cowardice and brutality; and for the outcasts of society, herded together in a way most likely to spread the disease, some allowance can be made.

Of such men as these, it may be written, and only of such as these :—"Let us judge them by what they did, not by what they failed to do." Emperors, and those in high office, can use their power for good, or can lay it down; and they must be judged by the use they make of the talents entrusted to their care.

It is far easier to recognize the duties of others than to do our own; but Maxim Tsiepherkin fully acknowledged that such skill as he possessed was entrusted to him for the benefit of suffering

humanity, upon which he was consequently under an obligation to attend.

Maxim Tsiepherkin occupied a position somewhat similar to that of a ticket-of-leave man ; he was bound to report himself occasionally to the police ; and being without a passport, he could not, without permission in writing, pass beyond the limits of the town district. Here he laboured for the rich and the poor ; and the money which he received from his wealthy patients, he distributed amongst those in need.

He knew that others, as innocent as himself, were forced to work like slaves at most unhealthy labour, and that they were treated worse than dogs ; and he had a pleasing task allotted to him ; yet he was not content.

Little Zillah had been his, and now she was his no longer. He knew that she would have come to him, had he written to ask her ; but he would not do this. He was only a criminal in the eyes of the law, and if she had come to him as his wife, she would have been reduced to his *status*. He was

unwilling to degrade her ; and he altogether refused to summon her to his side, as he would have been powerless to protect her from the insults of the officers and men in authority, who knew no law, human or divine, but their own wills.

Maxim soon heard many tales of insult and outrage inflicted upon the Polish women, who had been exiled for taking a part in the struggles of their countrymen for liberty and freedom ; and he strove to make himself content with his lonely life.

"She must stay where she is," he said to himself, "and I must be here alone. She cannot come to this place, made so vile, not by the criminals, but by those who guard them. Besides," he urged, being loath to complain under his burden, "in St. Petersburg, she has her own good work to accomplish, which could never be done here. She has her own people, her own sick, and her own poor ; and she must not leave them all, for my sake."

Though he strove to banish discontented thoughts from his mind, he could not forget how dear Zillah had been to him. His child, his little

lover, his wife, and his only love, was parted from him ; and probably they would never meet again, until the sorrows of life should be at an end, and his and her tasks completed, when they would meet to be together for ever and evermore.

Zillah, in far-off St. Petersburg, wept and mourned for him ; and it seemed to her that her burden was too heavy for her to bear. She had learned to love him slowly enough ; but now she knew what kind of man he was, and how vile other men were, in comparison with him, her husband.

When she had recovered from her swoon, she had gone home, and had there poured forth her prayers and lamentations unto his God. She could not go forth, as the woman proposed, that she might see her husband hanged.

The next day, she read in the newspapers that the Czar had been moved by his imperial and divine clemency to spare one of the political prisoners, condemned to death by the Imperial Commission ; but of the horrible sight which he had witnessed, the newspapers were not allowed to

speak, for the Censor of the Press does not allow any description to be given of Russian barbarity.

She went to Lertoffski, and he confirmed the report of the *Gólos*. Her husband was alive, he said, though dead to the world; and the Imperial Chancellor himself could not save a political prisoner from that minor penalty. For his own part, though he asked for no thanks, he, a poor unfortunate old fellow on the retired list, had found it very difficult even to get a reprieve for such a preacher of Socialistic doctrines as Maxim Tsiepherkin.

Lertoffski did not know, and Zillah could not learn from any other source, where Maxim was. Many a director of a theatre, many a fashionable woman of society who wished Zillah to sing in her *salon*, and many a noble, knew that there was no favour a woman could grant with honour, which the young *prima donna* would refuse to one willing and able to grant her this information. Either many of those in the highest official circles did not know, or they did not dare to say.

Persons, unrestrained by official positions, hazarded the opinion that he was exiled to the extreme east of Siberia, beyond the River Amuir, whence Bakunin had escaped to America, and where Tchernychevski, the great writer, was supposed to be still living. The Nihilists stated that the executions had been conducted with the most frightful barbarity, and that the drums had been sounded, all the way from the prison to the Simon-offski Plain, to prevent the condemned making it known to the people that they had been submitted to torture.

With a sad heart, Zillah went on with her work. She earned money, which she spent upon the poor ; she paid a young surgeon to attend such cases as Maxim had made particularly his own ; and she did her best to relieve suffering humanity. No one could speak the words of comfort which Maxim had spoken, and the surgeon she engaged had not, she thought, Maxim's skill ; but it was still something that she was able to hold out a helping hand to some of the outcasts

of St. Petersburg, stricken by poverty and disease.

She led a life very different from that of the other women engaged upon the stage ; but she did good, even there. She refused to play with women of the worst character, and she had become such a favourite with the public that managers found it necessary to comply with this, as it seemed to them, absurd demand.

Some people honoured her for her virtues ; but the grand-dukes and other noblemen who made the words "noble" and "profligate" synonymous, ceased to patronize her and to be among the audience on her benefit nights. She had been forced to tell them that, though she was a woman and an actress, she would not become their slave ; and they considered virtue inconsistent with her calling.

Zillah and Vera were very intimate friends now ; and Vera had learned where she had been wrong in the past. She had not even now the courage to go amongst the poor and the sick, as Zillah did ; but she was very pleased to contribute

to the funds of the many little charities which Zillah supported.

Zillah spent all her time in work ; but still she could not forget this Maxim Tsiepherkin, this queer fellow, with ideas and manners of living quite different to distinguished persons ; for she loved him with all her heart, and mourned for him, dead, or buried alive in Siberia.

He was never absent from her thoughts ; morning and night she would pray for him, who had taught her to know wrong from right, who had taught her to employ the talents which had been entrusted to her for a good purpose ; and she loved him dearly.

She proposed to take a company to Siberia, if she could induce one to accompany her ; otherwise she would go alone. She was determined to find Maxim Tsiepherkin, if he were alive ; and if he were dead, she would go on doing the work which he had taught her to do for poor suffering humanity.

There was not a woman in St. Petersburg more beautiful than she ; not even Vera Michailovna.

She was admitted to the mansions of those virtuous men and women from which profligate princes were excluded ; and when she met one nobly born but ignoble in life, she could be as proud and haughty, as she was humble and meek amongst those dependent upon her aid.

There were many who offered her love, and because she was a true woman, one of the few not to be bought with a price, they wished to marry her. Lertoffski was one of these, and she had refused him ; but because he had saved her Maxim's life, she offered, and he accepted, her friendship.

One of her lovers would not be so easily persuaded that she did not love him. It was Alexandroff, who had returned to St. Petersburg, being unable to live in the country, where there was no one who had a single idea in common with himself. Moreover, such triumphs as he had obtained, or could obtain, in the provinces, seemed to him mean and paltry ; so he returned to St. Petersburg, leaving the peasants much as he had found them.

Zillah's beauty was a surprise to him. The budding charms of the child had ripened into the bloom of womanhood ; and again he played at being in love with her, as he had in the past. He felt lonely with no one in the world to love him ; and after a youth spent in sipping honey from many a precious flower, he would have been content to love one woman only, and to cleave to her for all time.

Ambition and love are the two great passions of a man's life, and the former, Ivan Ivanovitch could not satisfy, even in the capital ; for if he had distinguished himself by writing or doing anything remarkable, he would have been forced to join one of the sad trains of emigrants, of which so many were being despatched to Siberia.

He had never forgiven Vera Micharlovna ; he had never seen her since her marriage ; and now, because she had wounded his vanity in not inviting him to her *salon*, he had no desire to see her.

He loved Zillah, the actress, who would give him no encouragement ; and she did not wish to

dismiss him, or to say an unkind word to him ; for he had been Maxim's friend, and should be hers, if it were possible, for Maxim's sake.

One day, ungenerously, he mentioned the time when she had acknowledged her love for him.

"You were not cold then," he said. "You did not treat me then as you treat the rest ; you loved me, and I believe you love me still."

"No, no," she answered.

"Yes, Zillah, my little pet, you do. . . . Maxim Tsiepherkin was a good man, but he was a queer fellow ; and now he is gone, little one, let us think no more of him. He never loved you as I do now ; and you loved me from the first."

"I love Maxim Tsiepherkin," she answered.

"But he is so impracticable, so useless to accomplish anything. . . ."

"No, Ivan Ivanovitch," she said, reproving him, "you are wrong. He was practical and useful ; neither you nor any other man can employ his talents better than Maxim did. You are idle. . . ."

"Idle, Zillah !"

"Yes, you accomplish nothing ; he did much." Then seeing that Ivan was vexed, she added, "But let us be friends for Maxim's sake."

"And must I spend my life, all alone ? must I go on living as I do now ? You do not know how miserable it is, Zillah."

"Ivan Ivanovitch," the actress continued, "when we were young, you won my love and that of Vera Michailovna. Now I love another, whom I deem nobler—but Vera Michailovna, she is free—and perhaps—she may not think as I do." Zillah gave a cheery little laugh, and ran away, leaving Alexandroff all alone.

Zillah still continued to sing at the theatre, and to spend the money she gained upon the poor outcasts whom Maxim had loved. She also sang occasionally at Vera's palace, in the only drawing-room at St. Petersburg which was now open to the young Liberals ; and she often accompanied Vera, or went alone, to visit the old man in the Nevski Prospect, who had saved Maxim's life. When Lertoffski was too ill to go out, she would sing,

or do anything he wished, to amuse him ; and she also visited all who were left of the quartet.

Vassili Alexandrovitch and Vladimir Dmitrievitch were dead ; and they had only the rashness of youth to excuse them. They had gone out for a walk together, and had listened to Maxim Tsiepherkin telling the public how terrible were the sufferings of the wounded Russians and Turks. Maxim and some others were collecting for the Red Cross Society's ambulance fund, and these two old fellows were foolish enough to stop and listen to Maxim, standing in the street with the thermometer at 10° , Réaumur, below zero. They gave the contents of their purses to the fund, and it was thus they caught colds which proved fatal to them both.

For many an act of kindness done, let us hope that they now enjoy their reward.





CHAPTER X.

LOVE IS THE REWARD.



VERA MICHAÏLOVNA looked down upon the ground. She would not raise her eyes to see him ; it was necessary, she thought, that he should be the first to speak. Still he was silent ; for the sounds which he wished to utter, would not shape themselves upon his tongue, and he was unable to express himself in words.

The illusions, the dreams of youth were past, and he had awakened to the stern realities of life. He knew now that he had not been a great man in the past, either socially or morally. He had

considered himself an intellectual giant ; but all that was past and gone, and his heart was sorrowful ; for it is a painful awakening, indeed, when one who has been dreaming finds himself a person of much minor deserts than the imagination has allowed him to suppose.

Even his heart had not been true to Vera Michailovna.

It had wandered away, hither and thither, seeking refuge in some kindly haven, storm-tossed as it had been by the wild waves of affliction and discontent. He had sought in vain ; for in the wide world there seemed to be no harbour for such a man as he.

Ambition, lofty desires, and hopes framed for others, the ardour and fervour of youth, even youth itself and the warm love of the heart—all these were spent.

Vera Michailovna had also pictured unto herself an ideal, and it had been shattered upon the rocks of the world.

There was a youth, comely in form and limb,

of noble purpose and of lofty aims, true, loving and faithful unto death, the friend of those in distress, the enemy of tyranny and oppression, brave as a lion, yet peaceful as a dove in the arms of her he loved.

Still he was but a false idol.

Her ideal was destroyed; and the ideal of life cannot come unto us again, when it has once been shattered and broken. The ideal is the child of a maiden's heart: if it die, never again can it come unto her in this weary, woeful world.

Kings may die and kings may live again, and despotism and tyranny may be transplanted from soil to soil, and yet may flourish. But the pure love of a maiden's heart cannot, like these, spring up a second time; it may defy wind, hail, and storm, until it fade and die; yet then it can have no further life upon earth, for it is as if a part of the soul were gone.

Neither Ivan Ivanovitch nor Vera Michailovna cared to speak. Each had learned that the other had not been all perfect; but each condemned

self, and not that other, who in the past had been so dear.

Vera fancied that she could hear the beating of her own heart; whilst to Ivan, it seemed that he had lived the better part of his life, and that he had no right to ask another to drain with him the dregs of the cup. However much she might have offended, it was he who had been the cause of all for which she could deserve blame. It was he who had seen the pearl of price upon the highway, and he had left it to be trampled under the feet of swine.

But he would not pass this pearl of love by a second time; he would not leave it to encounter a still ruder fate. He was poorer now in his own esteem than he had ever been before; and of such love as she could still grant him, he felt himself unworthy.

“Can you forgive me for the past, Vera Michaïlovna?” he asked, standing humbly by her side. “My life has been like the book I wrote years ago: I should have commenced both

quietly, and I should not have aimed too high at first; but I was anxious to create a sensation in the beginning, and so instead of taking Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meister' as my model, I imitated the French school, I began in the middle, and then I went back"

He had taken possession of her hand, and she allowed it to remain in his. He noticed too that her cheeks were alternately pale and flushed with colour, and that her eyes were glancing hither and thither, trying to hide themselves from his.

"And the end?" she asked. She was speaking to herself, rather than to him; she had not intended him to hear her.

"In the end," he continued, "the hero wins the heroine by noble deeds done in a just cause, by living a life of purity, by sacrificing himself for the good of humanity, by . . . ;" he knelt down at her feet.

"But I can never deserve you, Vera Michailovna, as he deserved his Verotchka. I am

unworthy, and I can never become worthy ; for I have been untrue to you, in word and in deed. But can you have mercy upon me ; can you forgive ? ”

For a moment she did not answer. Then the old love came streaming back, like a fountain, clear and pure ; and Ivan Ivanovitch, kneeling before her, was no longer a middle-aged man, but a chivalrous youth, one whom she could love, and love, and love, unto the end of time.

“There is nothing for me to forgive, Ivan Ivanovitch,” she said. “I too have left undone many things that I should have done ; and I have done many things which I ought not to have done. But I was never good ; not even in the first. I started with a wrong impression of life. At the Smolna Convent, they allowed us to suppose that marriage and riches were the two chief aims of a woman’s life. They bade us be charitable, it is true ; but the charity of a great lady was to resemble the throwing of a bone to a hungry dog. They said the words, but they never taught us

to understand that the poor were really our brethren."

"Girls in Russia want quite another kind of education," she continued. "It is nothing for a woman to be able to draw a little, to paint a little, to play a couple of pieces on the piano, to embroider netted purses, and to be able to dance; this is just as if it were the highest object of a woman's life, to become the *wife* of a dancing-master, or to teach the young generation how to qualify for such a position."

Vera Michailovna had felt less uncomfortable since she began to talk. She would have been at her ease if Ivan Ivanovitch had been seated some little distance off; but as it was, she managed to get on very well, until the word "wife" stuck in her throat, and refused to come out quite whole; then a flush of colour came to her pale cheeks.

She was silent; and Ivan did not speak.

After a long pause, she repeated, as calmly as she could:—

"Ivan Ivanovitch, there is nothing for me to forgive."

"You are cold," he said, rather bitterly, "and you always were. But would you send me away like this after so many years?"

"No," she answered, speaking in that soft voice that belongs only to the woman who loves. "No, let us be friends."

"Friends!" he exclaimed. "Can a woman neither forget nor forgive?"

"Forgive, yes, if . . ."

"But forget, no . . ." he said, interrupting her, and yet hesitating himself. He would have taken her in his arms, and would have pressed forgiveness from her lips, if he had dared.

But he did not dare. There she was, calm and self-possessed, he thought; and he did not know that love lay hidden within her heart. Love is blind!

"No," he continued, "you cannot forgive the evil that is past, and yet fail to remember . . . the old love." This he said so low, that she

might hear it or not, as she would. His eyes were wet with tears ; the old love had come back to him too, and . . .

“There are some things,” she said, in her gentle voice, “which a woman never wishes to forget.”

“Oh! Vera Michailovna . . . ” and he began to plead for himself, as he had never pleaded for another.

Some scenes, however, are sacred ; and this is one of them, when two, who have loved, meet and confess the sins of which in life they have been guilty, when they determine to commence life again, and together.

Let us pass it by, and only hear her say to Ivan Ivanovitch :—

“In youth, Ivan, we little ones wished to attempt too much. We thought ourselves giants, and we determined to undertake Herculean tasks, which in the end we failed to accomplish. Now,” she continued, “we will not begin again in the same way. We know that we are pigmies and

not giants, and we will be content if we are able to free a few from suffering, misery, and oppression."

Let us watch them standing by the altar in a little church, where Zillah and a few other friends of Vera Michaïlovna had assembled to witness a ceremony, grand and imposing, certainly, but simple in comparison with that which had been celebrated in the Imperial chapel.

Let us glance then at the ship bearing Ivan Alexandroff and his bride to the New World. On board, there were many old friends of Maxim Tsiepherkin; men and women who called him "Benefactor." There were some too who had been serfs to Ivan's father, and many so-called *Nihilists*, who were leaving the Old World for the New, to escape from tyranny and to find freedom.

Vera had purchased a vast tract of land in one of the Western States, and she was taking her colonists thither. She had presented the land to them, and they would establish a commune, such

as those to which they had been accustomed in Russia, and the elders would distribute the land in proportion to the amount of work of which each family was capable. But there would be no land dues for them to pay to proprietors, and no arbitrary authority to take from them whatever profit might accrue from their labours.

They would be far away, but they would not cease to love Russia. They would be true children to their fatherland, and from time to time, members of the young generation would return with the message of the New World for the Old, with greetings of fraternal love, and with tidings of liberty.

On a free soil, they would raise up missionaries, who would return as teachers, not as soldiers. The sight of homes destroyed by fire, of husbands, brothers, and sons, slain or terribly mutilated, cannot inspire the hearts of barbarians, or uneducated peasants, with any feeling of universal love; though it has been urged, by tyrants, that the sword is an agent of civilization. Vera thought

a hundred teachers capable of effecting more good than ten thousand soldiers.

“ Before our eyes,” said Ivan, “ a terrible spectacle must be enacted. An uprising of the People of Russia will stamp an indelible mark upon the history of the world ; there will be a new baptism of blood, a regeneration of the country, and a sweeping away of despotism.”

“ Liberty,” said Vera, “ is the mother of Peace, not the daughter of War. If Russia were free from Autocrat and landlords, she would do well. The peasantry would hold the land in common, each taking as much as he could cultivate, as was done before the time of Boris Godunoff, who introduced serfdom ; there would be free schools, universities, libraries, and hospitals, and the People would rule in the interest of the People.”

“ The present Czar will do nothing, and as to the last, he emancipated the serfs for his own purposes. Let us think of the sufferings he imposed upon the poor defeated Poles. . . .”

“ Nay, nay, Ivan, let us forget. When a man

is dead, even if he might have accomplished great deeds here upon earth, let us judge him rather by what he has done, than by his omissions and failures. Let us remember that the greater the wealth, the greater the power for evil, as well as for good, and the greater the temptation to choose the easier path."

"Because of this temptation to evil and selfishness, in consequence of great wealth and power, we must sweep both these things away!"

"Yes, yes, Ivan, they must be swept away; but not by you, and not by me. We must remember that we are only pigmies; that the mouse was not wise who tried to carry away a mountain; and that the *moujik* was not a clever fellow who tried to drink the sea dry. We have our work, and the giants have theirs."

Alexandroff sighed. There had been a time when he had wished to play a giant's part; but now he contented himself, for he had his Verotchka.

"I have you," he said, "and now I am glad to remain by your side; though there was a time

when I also had my plans for setting the ice of the Neva on fire."

"And do you think you will be long content with your easier task—and with me?" she asked. She was still a very woman.

Ivan pressed her hand.

"Content," he whispered, "for all time."

"What is that rising out of the water?" she asked a moment later.

"That," he answered, "is the statue of Liberty!"

He walked aft to the steerage; and when the Russian men and women there knew what it was, they cheered. Thus they greeted the goodly land of Freedom.

Far off in the capital of misrule and despotism, Zillah stayed to comfort the poor and afflicted. She had promised Vera Michailovna that she would care for the privy councillor whilst his daughter was away, leading men and women from the land of bondage.

The old man was very weak; he did not him-

self anticipate that he should live to see his daughter again. This did not grieve him very much ; they had never been very intimate friends, and now he had Zillah. She filled a daughter's place ; she looked up to him and called him "Benefactor," because he had saved the life of Maxim Tsiepherkin.

She was grateful ; for though Maxim might be dying slowly in the quicksilver mines, still whilst there was life there was hope, and she trusted that it might be permitted to her again in life to clasp her husband in her arms.

The old man was no longer jealous of Maxim Tsiepherkin. He recognized the fact that for him there could be no more marrying, and no more passionate love. The pure love of such an one as Zillah might be allowed him still ; and she treated him as if he were an aged and infirm father, and with such love and care he would fain be content.

Sometimes he would try to persuade himself that he was not such a bad man after all ; that

his life had been one honestly and well spent ; that he was still better, rather than worse, than the average man. He had never committed murder like Prince Potemkin ; he had never cheated his sovereign by means of newspapers like Count Adelberg ; he had never caused the death of poor soldiers by organizing gigantic frauds by which to deprive them of the necessities of life, as so many distinguished persons in the society of St. Petersburg had done ; so he considered himself a man, comparatively speaking, honest and good.

He did not desire to compare his life with that of Maxim Tsiepherkin ; he was not an idealist, and he was not one of those who believed in the rights of man. Still in these, his last days, he did make many plans for the benefit of the rest of humanity, though he did not put any one of them into execution.

His mansion, he said, would make an excellent hospital for the poor ; but as the noise of the alterations would disturb him, he proposed that his daughter's palace should be employed for that

purpose instead. He also desired to endow the proposed hospital, with any funds which were not his own; and he wished to appoint as the chief medical officer, Maxim Tsiepherkin, who was either dead, or buried alive in Siberia.

Zillah did not contradict the old man; she humoured his whims, and to reward her, he would listen to her singing the praises of Maxim Tsiepherkin. Lertoffski had already acknowledged that her husband was not dead, and that he had been the human instrument of saving Maxim's life.

Lertoffski would spend his time in devising charitable plans to be carried into execution at the expense of others; and when less despondent he would often tease the little actress about her love for Maxim.

One evening, when he was resting on the sofa as usual, he asked her if she had ever heard Maxim Tsiepherkin say a single harsh word to any one.

"Once," Zillah answered, "and once only."

"Please tell me what it was about, child; I should so like to know."

"Maxim offended a priest whom he met one day in the home of a poor patient.

"'You surely do not take money for your services from such poor people as these!' Maxim said.

"The priest then abused Maxim Tsiepherkin, and closed his argument in his own defence with the expression, 'Each for himself.'

"'In barbarous and half-civilized societies,' Maxim answered, 'there is indeed the characteristic saying, "Each for himself," but in a more advanced stage of civilization a gentler doctrine replaces the old; it is:—

"'All for each and each for all.'

"'What new thing is this?' asked the priest gruffly.

"'New perhaps to you,' Maxim responded, 'it is the doctrine of Christ.'"

The pale face of the old man gave a faint smile, full of sarcastic humour; then he lay still, and

Zillah went away to the theatre to earn the money which she spent upon the poor. Half-an-hour afterwards the old man died, so peacefully that the attendant, who had taken Zillah's place by his side, did not notice that his spirit had passed away to the realm of the Ruler who tempers justice with mercy.

When it was known in St. Petersburg that the private secretary to the late Czar, Alexander II., was dead, certain officials were sent to place seals on the drawers and desks in which he had been accustomed to store his papers.

A certificate of marriage, celebrated between Prince Alexander Petrovitch Potemkin and Zillah Helfmann, a Jewish actress, who had been converted to the Greek Church, was found; and with this, papers establishing the identity of Zillah, Maxim's wife, as the murdered woman's daughter, whom the prince had entrusted to the care of Henriette de Gramont. The marriage was legal, and Zillah, the actress, was entitled to all the late prince's wealth, with the exception of the part

which had been settled upon his wife, Vera Michailovna.

Zillah was very glad that the old man's plans had not all been drawn up in vain; she had desired the Potemkin Palace as a hospital for the poor, under the management of Maxim; and now, if they would only liberate him, all might be as she wished.

The late privy councillor had addressed a petition to the Crown for Maxim Tsiepherkin's release; and in it he had set forth an account of the life of the prisoner, and that of Zillah, his wife.

The newspapers and periodicals had all something to say about this little romance, which had taken place at the busy capital; and Zillah found many friends now, with interest at Court, to sign another petition for her husband's release. Finally, a pardon for Maxim Tsiepherkin was addressed to the Princess Zillah Potemkin, together with a passport for any messenger she might choose to employ.

She was her own messenger ; but the train was too slow which bore her to Nijni Novgorod ; and she was unable to enjoy the scenery of the river Kama, by which the steamer seemed to crawl along. The *tarantas* which took her from Perm, was better ; for she paid the post-boys liberally, and the horses sped along on the ice, and she was soon in the arms of Maxim.

She poured forth the love of her woman's heart, being no longer a child ; and Maxim offered up his prayers of thankfulness, because here upon earth, after his many trials, he was allowed this great joy.

Together they sped back to European Russia, which, in spite of the tyranny of the few, was still their country ; and they regarded it with affection, mingled with regret, because its future was dark, and overshadowed by all the horrors of a revolution, to be effected by fire and blood.

Maxim Tsiepherkin soon made the necessary alterations in the Potemkin Palace ; and it is now

known as the Potemkin Hospital. Great care is taken of the patients, and few rich men in St. Petersburg can obtain such attention as are there bestowed upon the suffering poor.

Decorations have been offered to the head physician, and Maxim has accepted them ; but he never wears them ; he is still the same humble little man he was when his time was spent in the hovels of the poor ; and Zillah is now his head-nurse. She only sings now to the convalescent patients, and occasionally for the benefit of some charitable institution much in want of funds. People will now pay large sums to hear her sing, for she is one of the celebrated persons of St. Petersburg, and it is fashionable to patronize those concerts at which she appears for the benefit of the poor.

There is but little immediate prospect either of improvement, or of reform, in Russia. The nobles who are discontented with the existing state of affairs, dream of an era of liberty ; but they are afraid of the military organization of the empire,

and pass their time in theorizing, because they do not dare to conduct any rational agitation for peaceful changes and practical reforms.

The typical Muscovite peasant still regards the Czar as a "divine figure," ruling by an unquestionable right, which it would be sacrilege to deny or oppose. The peasants, however, now flock to the towns in the winter season, where they can obtain work, when none can be done in the rural communes; there, they adopt the ideas of the artisans; and they return to the country with the hope of acquiring their lands without making any further payments to the former proprietors, and with some knowledge of the power which they would hold, were they to rise in a mass and shout:—"God save the Republic!"

The military conscription is a grievous burden to them, even in time of peace; but in war-time they are slaughtered like so many sheep, even less care being taken to prevent them suffering unnecessary pain. Still, there are teachers in the ranks, and many a *moujik*, torn away from wife

and home, would rather shoot an officer who is a tyrant, than an infidel who is a slave.

Maxim Tsiepherkin takes no part in politics now. He says that there are talents entrusted to him, for which one day he will be called to account, and he spends all his time caring for the sick patients under his charge. He is often asked, what is necessary for Russia; and he replies that education is necessary, and work is necessary.

In answer to the question of Tchernychevski, *What is to be done?* he says:—"Let each citizen be educated at the cost of the State! Let each citizen work for the benefit of the State! And let the old generation set an example of morality to the young!"

He still leads the same old life of self-denial. He wastes nothing upon luxury and extravagance, but goes out in the highways and by-ways to seek for those in misery and affliction. He is well known now, and even the Chief of the Secret Police would scarcely dare to interfere with him; for he is much respected by all the good citizens of

St. Petersburg, high and low, and they call him "the friend of the poor."

It is, however, not the history of Maxim Tsiepherkin's success, but the history of his trials, which deserves to be related : he is more cheerful than he was in the past, and when any one laughs and asks what he can hope to gain by devoting his wealth, his time, and his wife, to the service of the poor, he will point with honest pride to Zillah, his head nurse, and to the poor, who love him so well, and will say in a tone expressing perfect content :—

" LOVE IS THE REWARD."

